

THE ZIONIST CHURCHES IN MALAWI

History - Theology - Anthropology



ULF STROHBEHN

VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

The Zionist Churches in Malawi

Copyright 2016 Ulf Strohbehn

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission from the publishers.

Published by

Mzuni Press

P/Bag 201, Luwinga, Mzuzu 2, Malawi

ISBN: 978-99960-45-16-5

ISBN: 978-99960-45-03-5 (e-book)

Mzuni Press is represented outside Africa by

African Books Collective, Oxford

(orders@africanbookscollective.com)

Layout Design: Arto Karvonen

The Zionist Churches in Malawi

HISTORY – THEOLOGY – ANTHROPOLOGY

Ulf Strohbehn



MZUNI PRESS

Mzuni Books no. 17

Mzuzu

2016

Rakkaalle Kirsille

List of Abbreviations and Glossary

AIC	African Initiated (or Indigenous or Independent) Church
AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission
AoG	Assemblies of God
<i>Alevi</i>	plural of <i>mlevi</i>
Biomedical	term used to describe the western medical approach
Boma	seat of local government, the district administration's centre
<i>Bwalo</i>	communal meeting place
CCAP	Church of Central Africa Presbyterian
CCACZ	Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion (1)
central region	the central administrative region of Malawi where many Maseko Ngoni live
Class	a local Zionist congregation
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
HACZ	The Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3)
<i>Isangoma</i>	(pl. <i>izangoma</i>) a traditional diviner among the Zulu
<i>Kubonga</i>	a basic dance pattern, fast and loud
Machona	plural of <i>mtchona</i>
Maseko	a particular segment of the Ngoni who settled predominantly around Ntcheu
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
<i>Mtchona</i>	migrant worker
<i>Mlaliki</i>	preacher
<i>Mlevi</i>	pastor of a class
<i>Mvangeli</i>	evangelist
<i>Mvano</i>	women guild in Malawian churches
NAM	National Archives of Malawi
Ngoni	ethnic group which emigrated from Natal to Malawi and other countries

Nguni	name of the Ngoni before they wandered
Pentecostal	pertaining to charismatic manifestations found, among others, in Acts 2 and 1.Cor. 12 and 14
Pentecostalic	pertaining to the tenets and history within the modern Pentecostal movement
PHC	Pentecostal Holiness Church
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
Region	the southern African region (SADC countries)
SDA	Seventh Day Adventist (church)
<i>Seji</i>	a basic dance pattern, slow and devotional
<i>sing'anga</i>	term for a traditional healer, ranging from herbalist to spirit doctor
	Southern region the southern region of Malawi
UDF	United Democratic Front
<i>Ufiti</i>	witchcraft
UMCA	Universities Mission to Central Africa
<i>Vapostoli</i> Churches	a cluster of churches among the AICs, but not Zionists
ya bata	a Zionist church or denomination that does not use drums
ya malingaka	a Zionist church or denomination that uses drums
ZCC	Zion Christian Church (8)
ZEM	Zambezi Evangelical Church
ZIM	Zambezi Industrial Mission
<i>Ziwasheni</i>	a ritual immersion

List of Pictures

John Alexander Dowie	39
Young preacher in action	43
John George Phillips	86
Genesis Mbedza	92
Velemu Family	95
Foster Chaluluka	102
John Wesley Newton Dinigswayo	106
Mateyu Kawenga	112
Lipenga Magagula	135
Satifiketi Kanjere	137
Gabriel and Mrs. Kandodo	140
Sporo and Liwiza Saguga	149
Alstone Yohane Kaleke	151
Kachilowa and Mrs. Kalombola, in full regalia	152
Nikison Zalengera	154
Fraction and Mrs. Msalawatha	157
Robed dancers	169
Praying over the drums	176
Mock dancing	180
A preacher and his reader	205
Mlevi Nsani during healing prayers	226
James Medi	253
Healing prayers at Namadingo	257
Sister holding the Bible during Prayers	314
Enos Numeri Ng'ombe	316
<i>Mlevi</i> Kanada baptizing	327
The gate during <i>ziwasheni</i>	330
A menorah used during the Lord's Supper	334
Leaders of the Zion ya bata (2) standing in front of the	
Mausoleum near Salima	364
Girl in her Zionist dress	386
Two bearded leaders of the CCACZ	403

A Zionist wedding picture	408
Bishop Nwa preaching at an open grave	418
Kachilowa and Mrs. Kalombola	442
<i>Vapostoli</i> fire ritual	460

Tables

Names of Denominations found in Chikadya Village	48
--	----

Maps

First Churches among the Maseko Ngoni	66
First Zionist and Pentcostal Denominations in Ntcheu	124

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Dr. Klaus Fiedler for his encouragement and assistance, which saw this study through. My second supervisor, Prof. Dr. Joseph Chakanza has been a source of enrichment, both personally as well as professionally.

Rev. Wellem B. Kulanga (“ANKhoma”), lecturer of Church History at the International Bible College Berea, Blantyre, has been working as my research assistant in this project. My sincere thanks go out for all journeys, interviews, translations and discussions we had. Rev. Kulanga is pictured with the Zion ya bata leaders on page 364 second to the left. Other lecturers at the college have had their regular dose of Zionism as I rendered my discoveries during our discussions, devotions and lectures. I appreciate the fellowship of Patrick Chapola, Rev. Amos Khobili, Rev. Bismarck Lumwira and Rev. Christian Bongartz. Special thanks go out to Joseph Thawani Phiri, for keeping the college and its inhabitants in good shape – noni noni, abale!

I thank my colleagues from the AFM for years of good fellowship and ministry, especially Pastors E. Dauya, R. Maere and J. Hassani.

My final years in Malawi allowed more excursions into the academic community. I have fond memories of the Anthropological Department at CUNIMA, mainly because of Dr Alan Thorold, while he was there, and Mr Stewart Maganga. Mrs C. Kathumbi of Chancellor College, Zomba, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, was so nice to manage my missiology lectures there, an opportunity I cherished.

I have had the privilege to serve under a director, Pastor Helmut Timm, who early enough stressed the need for academic learning, while he emphasised, both by word and personal example, a missionary’s responsibility to serve people in a spiritual way. It is this dual ministry, by mind and spirit, which has fascinated me up to this day.

Mercy Chilunga and Josephine Kawejere from Kachere Publisher helped with the type styling and the final layout and thus saved me many days of work. I thank Steve Hayes, Tswane, for a lively exchange about the Zionists, Dr Peter Bailey for proofreading chapter 4 and discussing the medical dimension of it and Jackie Griffiths for proofreading chapter 5. I

enjoyed the privilege of a private history lesson about the Ngoni by Prof. Kings Phiri. The German Society for Mission Studies (DGMW) was so kind to assist with two grants in 2004 and 2013, enabling me to buy books, which could not be obtained from libraries in Malawi and eventually to help this study being published.

We have had an excellent home crew during those fifteen years in Malawi, who have become part of our extended family. Thanks and appreciation go to Enock Reid, Soza Ntata and Amos Kunyangala.

My daughters Marja, Annika and Celine grew up with a father who so many times sat quietly on the sofa, tucked away into some book or typing things into his notebook with a cup of coffee at his side. I thank them for tolerating such a strange being. During those years I have not been able to share with you what wonderful people and fascinating spirituality I discovered among the Zionists, partly because you were too young. I hope, however, that this book will find you.

This work is dedicated to my wife Kirsí, in the twentieth year of our marriage. Of all reasons to be grateful, you are the foremost. By letting me dream my dreams, you are the most important of them all.

Ulf Strohbehn
Blantyre, July 2012

Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Bearings: the Spiritual Field	4
1: Definitions	9
2. The Spiritual Field	
<i>a. The Place of Immanence</i>	10
<i>b. Inside the Spiritual Field</i>	13
<i>c. Theological Descriptions</i>	15
<i>d. Anthropological Explanations</i>	18
Chapter 2: Origins in Exile: American Roots, Ngoni	
Mfecane and Machona Labour Migration	22
1. American Roots: Slavery, Pentecostalism and John Alexander Dowie	22
<i>a. Slave Religion</i>	22
<i>b. Pentecostalism</i>	30
<i>c. John Alexander Dowie</i>	35
<i>d. Infancies of Pentecostalism and Zionism</i>	42
2. The Ngoni: <i>Mfecane</i> and Settlement	47
<i>a. Ngoni Religion</i>	57
<i>b. The Political Landscape</i>	66
3. <i>Machona</i> Labour Migration: Africanized Christianity Arrives in Africa	69
<i>a. The Migrant Labour System</i>	69
<i>b. Enter Zionism</i>	75
<i>c. Malawian Converts</i>	77
<i>d. Back Home</i>	79
Chapter 3: History: Zionism in Malawi 1922 – 2011	84
1. The Distant Originator: John George Phillips	84

2. The First Generation of Zionist Churches: 1922 – 1947	89
3. The Second Generation: 1948 – 1976	125
4. The Third Generation: 1977-2012	148
Chapter 4: Identity: What Constitutes Zionism	167
1. Apparel and Appearance	167
<i>a. Origin and Variety of Garments</i>	168
<i>b. Prophetically Designed Dresses</i>	172
2. Music and Dancing	175
<i>a. Times and Patterns of Dances</i>	175
<i>b. Origins and Traditions of Dances</i>	181
<i>c. Lyrics</i>	188
<i>d. Interpretation of Dancing and Music</i>	192
3. Preaching	197
<i>a. A Sermon by Mlevi Kalulu</i>	198
<i>b. What makes the Zionists' Preaching unique?</i>	202
<i>c. Types and Techniques</i>	207
<i>d. Genre: Moralizing Sermons</i>	211
<i>e. Vanguard of African Culture?</i>	213
4. Healing and Health	215
<i>a. Prophets and Zion's Concept of Health</i>	216
<i>b. Healers, Therapies and Healing Aids</i>	225
<i>c. Traditional Healing</i>	233
<i>d. Colonial Medicine</i>	239
<i>e. Mission Medicine</i>	243
<i>f. Characteristics and Demarcations of Zion's Health System</i>	247
<i>g. Healing in the Right Mind</i>	265
Chapter 5: Theology: Salvation and the Church	274
1. Salvation: Between Law and Grace	275
<i>a. Dietary Laws</i>	278
2. The Concept of Evil: Witchcraft and Spirit-Affliction	286
3. Healing as Part of Salvation	293
<i>a. Healing as Counter Sorcery</i>	293

<i>b. Holistic Salvation</i>	295
<i>c. The Weight of Healing: Church or Cult?</i>	296
<i>d. The No. 1 Recruitment Device</i>	300
4. How People become Zionists	302
<i>a. Backsliding and the Need for Evangelism</i>	302
<i>b. Evangelism</i>	304
5. Prayer Life	307
6. The Bible in Zion	311
7. Settlements	316
8. Ordinances and Symbols	323
<i>a. Baptism</i>	323
<i>b. A Baptismal Service</i>	326
<i>c. The Meaning of Baptism</i>	328
<i>d. Ziwasheni – Ritual Washings</i>	330
<i>e. The Lord's Supper</i>	332
<i>f. Symbols</i>	337
9. Leadership	340
<i>a. Patterns</i>	340
<i>b. Offices</i>	345
<i>c. Transitions</i>	351
<i>d. Laity and Clergy</i>	358
10. Summary: The Concept of Salvation	361
<i>a. Malawian Messiahs?</i>	362
<i>b. Ancestor Veneration</i>	366
<i>c. Salvation and Malawian Zionism in Historical Perspective</i>	369
Chapter 6: Culture: Two Circles	374
1. Inner Circle: The Zionist Life in Family and Rituals	374
<i>a. Contraception, Birth and Purification</i>	374
<i>b. Initiation</i>	378
<i>c. Women</i>	385
<i>d. Men</i>	399
<i>e. Marriage</i>	406
<i>f. Death, Funeral and the Hereafter</i>	414

<i>g. Conclusion: Culture and Rites of Passage</i>	423
2. Outer Circle: The Zionists' Relation to Society	428
<i>a. Economy</i>	428
<i>b. Education and Theological Training</i>	435
<i>c. Political Involvement</i>	438
<i>d. Relations with other Denominations and Confessions</i>	451
Conclusions	479
Bibliography	489
Appendix	523
Index	537
Chart of all Zionist Denominations in Malawi	548

Introduction

“Doing theology is searching for God in our villages.”¹

More than 100,000 people in Malawi belong to the Zionist churches. This study is what others would call ‘a thick description;’ it is a first systematic depiction of all Zionist denominations in the country.² It portrays these churches by tracing their history, describing their spirituality, investigating their culture and family life and by researching their place in the country’s ecclesiastic and social environment. For comparison and contrast’s sake, churches on the right (more conservative, mainly belonging to the pentecostalic ferment) and on the left (more innovative, mainly belonging to the *Vapostoli* camp) to the Zionists have been researched as well. Constant parallels and contrasts are drawn to developments in other countries with Zionist believers. Cultural elements among the Zionists are compared to similar features in society or other churches.

This book is the product of a long journey, which lasted for eight years. It took me through many villages in this country, archives and libraries in Malawi and abroad as well as through diverse internet forums that deal with African Independent Churches. More than onehundred interviews have been conducted, and we attended hundreds of Zionist meetings. To me, it was an inner, spiritual journey, too. I have again learned that the Body of Christ is bigger than I had presumed. David Bosch is so right when he writes, “*I realize that my theological approach is a ‘map’, and that a map is never the actual ‘territory.’*”³

I admit to not have fully filled the role of ‘participant observer’, however much this disappoints some anthropological idealists. I say this inspite of eating with the Zionists, attending their meetings, sometimes I

¹ Musimbi Kanyoro, *In Search of a Round Table. Gender, Theology and Church Leadership*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997, p. 177.

² Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, 2001, p. 6.

³ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, New York: Maryknoll, 1992, p. 187.

even danced a little to their unique tunes. The Zionists themselves wanted more participation. Often they invited me to speak at their meetings, which I did, some even mused for me to become a member of their church, which I did not. Once someone prophesied over us. However, I felt that I needed a certain distance to see them well. Anything too near or too far would have distorted my vision. On the other hand, a complimentary indigenisation takes place when an outsider learns to speak Chinyanja. As such, I am seen as '*a Malawian*;' the Zionists often called me so and so I found open doors and a good level of acceptance among them. Because of the language, they felt that they could *talk* to me, and I never wanted more.

As it dawned upon me that a theological approach alone will not do justice to an overall portrait, I began to consume literature on ethnic dances, sociology, economy, medicine in Africa and other related fields. The outcome is a theological study with unmuffled overtones from history and anthropology, sometimes touching the borderlands of psychology, medicine and political science. It is, to be precise, especially the interface of the different disciplines that sheds most light on our subject. The attempt at a more holistic approach to the Zionists has tremendously enlarged my own horizons and I believe that the final product is, while far from being complete, an insightful study about the manifold aspects and cultural richness that comprise Zionism in Malawi.

One wet towel I would like to throw right at the beginning. A 'methodological atheism' does not help further. I do not demand "faith" as a precondition for the study of religious groups, yet I find it equally preposterous to require atheism as a fitting starting point.

I understand the pitfalls such an approach tries to avoid. Yet this kind of atheism stands in the way of several objectives as it would have seriously hampered the research work for this study, and many others, of that I am sure. Such an attitude prevents the researcher from any meaningful nearness to his subjects. It is telling that this persuasion has been forwarded by theoreticians (Berger and Zijderveld), who might read about Zionists, but will never dance with them. As much as a dog smells fear, so the Zionists will feel if the inquirer has a principal distance to their

cause – and immediately the ‘personal’ question whether one believes in God or not will have professional consequences. Field research in the theological frame of reference is the art of getting people to *share* their faith – anything less will remain an anthropological perspective at the expense of theology or, people have squared this circle, too: a literary approach to an essentially oral culture.

Gabriele Marranci discusses this question, “*For instance, we may wonder, whether an atheist or agnostic anthropologist may be able to understand religious people fully.*” My take is that I agree with Marranci if the stress is put on the word “fully,” but not more.⁴ I favor openness. Openness and interest on the part of the researcher will get us a longer way than critical gazing.

Lastly, a few words about the structure of this book. This study is not built on any theory. It encounters lots of theories, confirms the facts and refutes several theological and anthropological fictions as we go along, but the content and structure is set by the objects of study themselves: the Zionists. The structure follows to a good degree those patterns, which the Zionists *live*. Chapter 3 tells their history in chronological order. Chapter 4 is comprised of the four major elements of their services, thus covering much ground towards establishing a Zionist spiritual identity. The following chapter deals with their largest identity marker, salvation. Chapter 6 reflects Zionist culture, and what would be easier than to follow their rituals from the cradle to the grave?

Footnotes are only given for reference; they do not tell an added story and the reader can be at ease to omit them. The maze of thirty Zionist denominations in the country can be confusing at times. The chart at the end papers provides a quick, graphic reference.

Encountering Malawi’s Zionists is a tremendously enriching experience, both spiritually as well as culturally. This book will have done its service if it conveys this experience to the reader, too.

⁴ Gabriele Marranci, *The Anthropology of Islam*, New York: Berg, 2008, p. 76.

1. Bearings: the Spiritual Field

“Religion must have feeling,
must be feeling.”⁵

1. Definitions

Malawi’s Zionist churches are part of African Indigenous Churches, also called African Initiated or African Independent Churches, abbreviated AIC.⁶ These churches exist from South Africa to southern Sudan and from Eritrea to the Atlantic. Daneel classifies the Aladura churches of West Africa as Zionists.⁷ Turner says that what is called Aladura in Western Nigeria is called Zionist in South Africa, and, having read Sundkler, elsewhere compares and likens the West African scene to our region.⁸ In some countries the AICs form the biggest cluster of Christianity with Zionists the most numerous among them. For example in South Africa, 11% of the population are Zionists and almost one third of the population worships in an AIC.⁹ In Swaziland, Zionists comprise 40% of the

⁵ Ralph Waldo Emerson, in: Martin Marty, *Pilgrims in their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America*, New York: Penguin, 1984, p. 210.

⁶ Cephas N. Omenyo, “Essential Aspects of African Ecclesiology: The Case of the African Independent Churches”, *Pneuma*, Cleveland: Society for Pentecostal Studies, vol. 22, no. 2, 2000, pp. 231ff.

⁷ Martinus L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol. 2, The Hague: Mouton, 1974, p. 192.

⁸ Harold W. Turner, *African Independent Church, II, The Life and Faith of the Church of the Lord*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1967, pp. xvii, 48, 98f. Harold W. Turner, “A Typology for African Religious Movements”, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Leiden: Brill, Andrew F. Walls, ed., 1967, vol. I, no. 1, p. 27. See also Christian G. Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana: A Study of Some Spiritual Churches*, London: SCM Press, 1962.

⁹ www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/wz/html. (20.3.2008). Allan Anderson, Samuel Otwang, *Tumelo. The Faith of African Pentecostals in South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA, 1993, p. 3. Dawid Venter, ed., *Engaging Modernity. Methods and Cases for Studying African Independent Churches in South Africa*, Westport: Praeger, 2004, pg. 20.

population.¹⁰ They are going from strength to strength in Mozambique,¹¹ where the UNDP count sees them stronger than the Roman Catholic Church; however, the US government publications accord them 17.5% of total population against still 23.8% Roman Catholics.¹²

Theologians and other researchers are in unison as far as the abbreviation AIC goes, with rather lively discussions as to what the “I” stands for.¹³ This hardly matters in our context, for Malawian Zionists are all *independent* from missionary domination, all of them were *initiated* by Africans and every Zionist denomination can be called *indigenous*, if compared to any other Christian grouping in the country. So, no matter which of the three “I” we choose for our Malawian context, it will be a fitting abbreviation for the object of our study. The qualification of *independent* is the most outdated. Most churches in Africa are independent. Many, who are not independent on the outside, only retain the link to missionaries for tradition or prestige’s sake. Missionaries serve more and more in advisory roles, not as an ecclesiastic Big Brother. However, many churches that are independent would gladly roll out the red carpet for donors and funds from abroad. This observation from Malawi is supported by Walls, who certainly has a wider scope.¹⁴ Neither are independent churches the new kids around the block. Time moves on. In Malawi, Pentecostal or even Lutheran missionaries are pioneering churches these days, assuming that Christianity in this country is still at Day One, while some independent denominations are getting ready for their centennial celebrations.

Three hallmarks suffice to identify a body of believers as Zionist in this study. All churches, which have historical links in their genesis to other

¹⁰ www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/wz/html, 20.3.2008.

¹¹ UNDP, *Mozambique. National Human Development Report 1999*, Maputo, 2000, p. 20. www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mz/html. (20.3.2008)

¹² <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mz.html>. 29.11.2010.

¹³ Dawid Venter, ed., *Engaging Modernity. Methods and Cases for Studying African Independent Churches in South Africa*, Westport: Praeger, 2004, pp. 13ff.

¹⁴ Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000, p. 114.

Zionists, usually fall under the same denominational cluster. This has to be checked with the second hallmark, which are doctrinal tenets endeared and practiced by Zionists. Faith healing, dietary laws, purification ceremonies, uniforms and their distinctive way of preaching are the most prominent markers. Third, the self-designation of the church has been taken into account. Most Zionists have the word “Zion” in their name, but such a claim, again, has to be checked with the first two markers.

Other groups, which belong to the AIC category, are the so called “Ethiopian” churches, many Pentecostal churches and the *Vapostoli* cluster. The first certainly embody the attribute “independent,” whereas the Pentecostals are now so diversified, that it would be easy to describe many of them as independent, African-initiated and indigenous, while others display exact opposite features. Ethiopian and *Vapostoli* (in Malawi sometimes also called Apostoli) churches will be discussed here as some of them border or have crossed over to Zion in Malawi. The question, as to whether the contemporary Zion movements are part and parcel of the Pentecostal movements in Malawi will be answered in the concluding chapter. Historically, they come from the same cradle as the Pentecostals, but have evolved differently.

The best working definition of AICs comes from H. W. Turner:

...a historically new development arising in the inter-action between a tribal society and its religion and one of the higher cultures and its major religion, and involving some substantial departure from the classic religious traditions of both the cultures concerned, in order to find renewal by reworking the rejected traditions into a different religious system.¹⁵

This certainly rings true for our case. The two protagonists are assembled on stage: Ngoni society (“tribal society”) and US American healing

¹⁵ Harold W. Turner, “Tribal Religious Movements, New,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1975, in: Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000, p. 112.

theology (“major religion of a higher society”). Supporting actors are traditional Malawian religions and, mainly in the negative, the colonial British set up, which created the traumatic conditions in which Zionism became the solution. (Such colonial ‘culture’ certainly wasn’t higher and in our case, the Zionists did adapt little from existing churches in Malawi, founded by British missionaries, but were influenced to a large extent by spiritual currents flowing from the other side of the Atlantic.)

These are the original ingredients of the movements and the next chapter will introduce every one of them and show how all of them contributed to the rise of Zionism in this country. It would be a mistake to define an AIC solely by one of these ingredients. For South Africa, Oosthuizen overemphasized the “tribal religion” (to use Turner’s terms) and thus classified the religious scene into churches, Christian sects and nativistic movements. The latter were, in his opinion, groups which still held “*the basic doctrines of the indigenous religion*.”¹⁶ (According to Linton, a nativistic movement is a “*conscious, organized attempt on the part of a society’s members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of its culture*”).¹⁷ A similar assumption can be found with Sundkler when some Apostolic and Zionist churches in South Africa were named nativistic, too.¹⁸ Such labeling will not hold true in Malawi (and both, Oosthuizen and Sundkler later corrected their earlier interpretations).¹⁹ The wide array of Zionist churches in the country does indeed include some groups which are closer to traditional tenets. However, it will be difficult to put any denomination into one single box, since they do display strong Christian beliefs, Pentecostal liberties, Baptist practices and traditional

¹⁶ Gerhardus C. Oosthuizen, *Post-Christianity in Africa*, London: C. Hurst, 1968, p. 132.

¹⁷ Ralph Linton, “Nativistic Movements”, in: *American Anthropologist*, Arlington: American Anthropological Association, no. 45, pp. 230-240, 1943, quoted from Jack D. Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion*, New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 181.

¹⁸ Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, London: OUP, 1961, pp. 55, 297.

¹⁹ Gerhardus C. Oosthuizen, “Indigenous Christianity and the Future of the Church in South Africa”, in: *Religion and Social Transformation in Southern Africa*, Thomas G. Walsh, Frank Kaufmann, eds., St. Paul: Paragon House, pp. 157 – 173, 1999. Bengt Sundkler, Christopher Stead, *A History of the Church in Africa*, Cambridge: University Press, 2000.

elements all at the same time.²⁰ It is possible to line up the Zionist denominations in Malawi and scale them according to their proximity to African traditions, but the entire cluster of churches cannot be named “nativistic.”

However, AICs are more than the sum of their parts. Listing the ingredients does not necessarily provide us with the mortar that binds them all together.²¹ There must be a common marker, which now, after the term “independent” has expired, still defines them as AICs.

This cluster of African churches is not christocentric. One indicator for this is their strong affinity with the Old Testament. Both their adaptation of Hebrew customs and their legitimization of traditional African rites through the Old Testament give evidence for this. Their preference for Old Testament texts in preaching shifts away from the centre, which is Christ. All this does not mean that they have no concept of Christ, but He is not the pivotal point in the AICs. Walls suggest this to be the Word, with a certain biblicist tendency to it.²² This I can not deny, although my hypothesis is that the strongest common bond between these groups is not the Bible. No doubt, the Bible is in hard use among them, but the same can be said about evangelical churches, translators in Papua New Guinea and atheist professors of theology. They all use the Bible, but in different contexts and with different degrees of esteem for it. The same can be said when looking at the ferment of AICs on this continent. A *Vapostoli* church might well have a Bible usage which resembles more a traditional spirit-healers’ magical handling of the Book, than, say, the hermeneutical approach of a city Pentecostal church in Nairobi.

A further common marker is the so called “Hebraist” element (H. W. Turner).²³ As the name says, Zion holds an affinity with the Old

²⁰ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol. 2, The Hague: Mouton, 1974, p. 319.

²¹ Dawid Venter, ed., *Engaging Modernity*, Westport: Praeger, 2004, pg. 25.

²² Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000, p. 116.

²³ Harold W. Turner, “A Typology for African Religious Movements”, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Leiden: Brill, Andrew F. Walls, ed., 1967, vol. I, no. 1, pp. 1-34. For a theological

Testament. In this study, it will surface in various settings described and will eventually be evaluated when discussing their culture in chapter 6. Hebraism appears in great variety among Malawi's Zionists but is, in general, weaker than among South African Zionists. It does not serve as a common marker for AICs, as many other churches across the globe have Hebraist tenets, for example some Lutherans in Germany and Charismatics in Finland.

2. The Spiritual Field

I propose that what defines AICs is a mystical inclination, a phenomenal location, which is called the *spiritual field* in this study. Anderson calls the AICs "spirit churches" and thus qualifies their most distinct tenet.²⁴ Schoffeleers talks of processes from "*possession cults to Spirit churches*" when looking at Malawi's southernmost district in the 1980s.²⁵

Mystics can be found in most religions. Common to all of them is their desire to be in contact with a higher power in an unmediated and undiluted way. Some mystics were and are certainly over the top; others seem more credible, especially if the outcome of their spiritual experiences benefits people in a practical and ethical way. It takes little effort to prove that the God of the Bible is *not* remote and unapproachable. He is not *deus absconditus*, the hidden or veiled god (Isa. 45, 15), but *deus revelatus*, the One who shows Himself to His people. He comes for a stroll in the Garden of Eden, visits His friend Abraham and reveals Himself to Moses. His glory filled Solomon's temple. The crown of God's immanency is the incarnation of Jesus Christ. God can come no nearer to man than in Jesus. The Holy Spirit has continued God's presence on earth after Christ ascended. With the Spirit, whose job description is to

theory on this see Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993, p. 71.

²⁴ Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, Cambridge: University Press, 2004, p. 104.

²⁵ Matthew Schoffeleers, "Pentecostalism and Neo-Traditionalism: The Religious Polarization of a Rural District in Southern Malawi", in David Maxwell, Ingrid Lawrie, eds., *Christianity and the African Imagination, Essays in Honour of Adrian Hastings*, Leiden: Brill, 2002, p. 263.

glorify Christ, believers of all ages have had countless spiritual experiences. It is therefore important to start with God when talking about mystical experiences, which I describe in this study as the *spiritual field*, into which the believer steps. That man can experience a “touch from God,” as some say, is something familiar and even called for in the Bible.

a. The Place of Immanence

Different Christian denominations ascribe the presence of God to different locations. It is well possible to use their theologies as a grid. Roman Catholic and Anglican believers stress that the Lord is present in the sacraments. God dwells somehow on or near the altar and in the elements.²⁶ His graces are bestowed by rituals, which authorized persons carry out. During most of their history, these churches recognized ecstatic religious experiences only when ascribing them to the devil.

Evangelical Christians hold to their own dogma of the Bible’s inspiration. God is present in the Scripture and comes to them through the Word. Their religion has stepped a little bit forward. It is not centered on the altar, but derives its inspiration from of the pulpit. (Baptist theology, Reformed dogmas and Lutheran orthodoxy are all huddled around the same place, some leaning a little more to the altar, others more to the pulpit). In general, Protestantism, especially the European type, is far away from any mystical inclination. Protestantism as a whole, if contrasted to Roman Catholic faith, stands for “*the immense shrinkage in the scope of the sacred in reality.*”²⁷ So they are left with the Word, from which they profess the only true miracle in the Protestant universe: the grace of God.²⁸

Pentecostals have stepped even further.²⁹ To them, immanence is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer. Their concept and experience

²⁶ Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery*, London: Catholic Truth Society, 1967.

²⁷ Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, New York: Random House, 1990, p. 111.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

²⁹ Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999, p. 132.

is a pew-centered presence of God. Pentecostals initially entered the spiritual field through communal prayer. Simultaneously, everybody prayed out loud. Or they waited in suspended silence, ‘tarried on the Lord’, until somebody became a channel of revelation or divine power. Communal prayer and waiting on the Lord charged the atmosphere during the first two generations of Pentecostalism and something extraordinary seemed to happen all the time. Manifestations of the Supreme Being occurred through any participant in the service. Young women would suddenly prophecy, old men exercised the gift of healing and illiterate workers edified others with the gift of wisdom. As time went by, Pentecostals have lost a little of their pew-centeredness and the spiritual field has been shifted. It is now entered by two ways, one before the sermon, and the other after the preaching. The fixed item of “Praise and Worship” has created a new frame and constitutes the spiritual field. “Let us now stand, let us sing and Sister Banda will lead us into the presence of the Lord.” Such an announcement is an open invitation to leave everything “worldly” (*zapansipano*) behind, and enter the field. Praise and Worship (some differentiate between the two, then “worship” is the element which opens to the spiritual field more than “praise”) takes place before the sermon. (This is common in all Malawian Pentecostal Churches, also those who call themselves “charismatics,” but are, by pedigree, rather to be classified as Pentecostals or Neo-Pentecostals.) During worship, believers enter the spiritual field where they are, usually in the pews. After the preaching, a new ‘ritual space’ has opened up, the area between pulpit and pews.³⁰ The custom of giving people an opportunity to stay behind for further counselling after the service comes from the early American Revivals and was developed under the ministry of Charles G. Finney.³¹ People who wanted to apply the sermon in a specific way to their lives “stayed behind.” At some point of time they were given a bench to sit on, and so they “came forward to stay behind.”

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 127ff.

³¹ Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revival*, Grand Rapids: Bethany House Publishers, 1989. German translation: *Erweckung. Gottes Verheißung und unsere Verantwortung*, Siegen: Gottfried Bernard, 1987, pp. 271f.

Revivalist meetings offered sinners the chance to come forward. This happened not only after the meeting, but increasingly at the end of it. Since then it has become customary in many evangelistic campaigns. Billy Graham and Reinhard Bonnke, for example, challenge people to get out of their seats and to come forward, all to make a public step towards Christ. Different reasons make Pentecostals urge the people forward after the sermon. Those seeking repentance, healing or the Baptism in the Holy Spirit are welcome to step forward. However, people do come with all kinds of needs. Help in time of unemployment, for example, is oftentimes prayed for. It is my observation that this offer, to come forward, is extended in almost all meetings of Pentecostals in Malawi. And it is usually the local church leadership, the pastor, elders and deacons, and the pastor's wife, too, that lend an ear and then lay hands on those who come with their needs. After this, people enter the field and this is sometimes expressed by shaking, falling down, laughter or weeping.

Where do Zionists fit into the grid? Every one of the above mentioned streams of Christianity, the altar-centered Roman Catholic and Anglican piety, the evangelical emphasis on the Bible and Pentecostal/charismatic spirituality happening in the pews and up front, demand an architectural setup which is at least aligned to create a front where a ritual space can be established. Moreover, most churches are constructed along traditional patterns; they consist of the space that includes nave and chancel, although charismatics certainly avoid such vocabulary for their meeting places. Zionist spirituality differs as it takes place in a circle.³² The spiritual field is, at least physically, created by the people forming a ring. The center of that ring is the sacred space. In the center, the drums declare the Kingdom of God, while the believers circle it, dancing barefoot on Holy Ground. From the center the sermon is preached and in the center the sick kneel, bishops lay hands on them while the rest of the congregation again forms a ring by dancing. This is not to say that Zionists have not taken over tenets and ordinances from the above mentioned churches. Altars can be found. Zionists can be very sacramental, not only

³² For a discussion of African spirituality and circularness see Ulf Strohehn, *Pentecostalism in Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005, p. 111.

with bread and wine and water, but by using sticks, ashes, salts and much more, as we will see. They believe in the Bible as the absolute divine authority and will not stop short of declaring the Word of God infallible. It can also happen in a Zionist meeting that the pew takes over. A woman suddenly falls under the inspiration, prophecies, and the entire service takes a new course.

Yet what defines them is this circularness. If they own a building, it will be rectangular, but they still dance in circles indoors. Dancing accompanied by drums moves the Zionist believers into the spiritual field. Some groups sway up to physical exhaustion and in that moment, they encounter the Holy Spirit. One cannot dance in a circle alone. Zionist worship is corporate, although the individual experiences differ, of course. Privatization is said to characterize religion in modern societies, but Malawi's Zionists will have none of it.³³

And then there is physical healing. Written big on Zion's banner, it is immanence's most physical event, the most applicable form of the spiritual field in Africa. The Zionist groups portrayed in this book are not the pinnacle of some spiritual evolution, yet they reflect different Christian traditions. This manifoldness, paired with African creativity and pragmatism, has made the Zionists on this continent so much richer in their culture, if compared, for example, to the American mother church.

b. Inside the Spiritual Field

What kind of experience does one make when entering the spiritual field? Within the context of this study, people enter the spiritual field in a meeting. Testimonies of solitary experiences exist, but they are rare. In such a meeting a person makes a transcendental experience; he or she will be touched by a power, which, in their words, is not of this world. I have collected different expressions from the USA, Europe and Africa to describe this phenomenon. To some, the spiritual field is non-worldly, so they say that, "*it's heaven below*," or "*heaven kisses earth*." The presence of Jesus is felt and expressed as "*the sweetness of Christ*," and "*Christ in*

³³ Peter L. Berger, "Religious Institutions", in: Neil J. Smelser, ed., *Sociology: An Introduction*, New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1967, pp. 329ff.

you.” Some said, “*Jesus hugged me.*” John’s words of “*abide in me,*” continue the theme of mutual indwelling, they have been very popular among holiness saints in the early 20th century. Before that, John Wesley used “*heart-work*” to describe religious emotionalism in his day and age. Black people in the USA recognized the spiritual field within Methodism:

Returning home from the service that night Frank said, ‘Well, Mother, what did you think of the meeting?’ She replied, ‘Frank, it was the nearest thing to old-fashioned Methodism I have seen since I was a little girl, and if God has anything more for me, I want it.’³⁴

Among Pentecostals, the presence of the Holy Spirit is described as “*let the power come,*” “*when the power falls on me,*” “*to be filled with the Spirit,*” “*enveloped in the Spirit*” and “*the fire (of the Spirit) fell.*” Pentecostals speak of the baptism in the Holy Spirit as the entrance into the spiritual field and a subsequent life therein. One of their early pioneers wrote this advice to his devout readers, “*Get in the Spirit, stay in the Spirit...*”³⁵ About God’s presence, they say that “*the Lord is here,*” “*I got a touch from God,*” “*I have been saturated with God*” and, more recently, “*God is in the house.*”

Malawians have one governing phrase for the spiritual field and its outcome. “*Tadalitsika*” initially only means “we have been blessed.” Its use however is very specific. It is said as a confirmation for a meeting with a good dosage of immanency. They say that “*God has visited us.*” Zionists and Pentecostals have expectations when they go to church. In the Lower Shire valley, for example, a good number of them expect to be blessed by the laying on of hands, an act that constitutes the spiritual field among them. Then many fall down and shake. Common is to see people crying and shaking. Quite a number of Malawians laugh out loud when entering

³⁴ This happened in 1907 in Winnipeg, Canada. Robert A. Larden, *Our Apostolic Heritage*, The Apostolic Church of Canada, Friesen Printers, 1971, pp. 29f.

³⁵ George Floyd Taylor in Douglas Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003, p. 90.

the spiritual field, perhaps those who otherwise don't have much to laugh about in this life.

From the spiritual field, people report that they feel God, that He has touched them, spoken to them, healed them. Some of these sensations are physical; but the majority of them are not, they take place within the spirit of man. Body and spirit cannot always be neatly compartmentalized. African people especially are more holistic in their being, which makes attempts at Hebrew dichotomy or Greek trichotomy rather futile. However, soul and body do express the spiritual field. This happens through weeping, laughing, murmuring, clapping, jerking, jumping, swaying, dancing, running. The expression "*to be slain in the Spirit*," nowadays still in use among British Pentecostals, describes both, the sensation of having entered the spiritual field and its expression, namely lying flat on the floor, in awe of the Almighty. The same experience is sometimes called "resting in the Spirit" by Catholic and Episcopalian charismatics.³⁶ The spiritual field is a place where man moves to, not God, for He is already there. The effort is, therefore, one-sided. Other reports, where it is rather God who comes to meet man and thus surprises them with His presence, are, contrary to Pentecostalism, not known among Zionists. The latter's rites on how to get in touch with their God are much more fixed.

c. Theological Descriptions

With theologians, the concept of the spiritual field as the main marker for AICs (and Zionism and Pentecostalism as a part of them) initially received little attention, but things are changing as more and more is written about the movements.³⁷ For one, the Pentecostals have been so taken up with glossolalia, written countless books and pamphlets about it that they failed to see the wider picture. Speaking in tongues is a symptom and outcome of the spiritual field – as are all other gifts of the Holy Spirit.

³⁶ Meredith B. McGuire, *Ritual Healing in Suburban America*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991, p. 64.

³⁷ Jerome R. Boone, "Community and Worship: The Key Components of Pentecostal Christian Formation", *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, Vol. 8, 4/1996, pp. 129-142.

Pentecostalic historians love to go through church history and give evidence of all kinds of charismata which had happened before 1907. The bread and butter question, however, is why, in the first place, are the people open to charismatic experiences? Something much vaster stands behind speaking in tongues, a rediscovered form of Biblical immanence, which the Pentecostals have been instrumental to bring back into Christianity. Among Pentecostalism's historians, Anderson comes closest when he writes of "*the immediacy of God in the services,*" and that as an African element within the movement, which is the case I argue here.³⁸ It is interesting that such an observation comes from Anderson, who as a white (South) African, and a good seasoning of research among Zionists, feels the similar spiritual currents underlying black religious expressionism and global Pentecostalism. He does not, however, expand his observation any further. Albrecht must be credited with seeing Pentecostal spirituality as part of a wider field than the charismata.³⁹ He is a theologian, yet his approach is anthropological, focusing on rites within the movement. His term 'ritual field' is not what is meant with 'spiritual field' in this study.⁴⁰ Yet he has observed similar mystic encounters and comes to terms with them. "Transcendental efficacy" is described as an attitude of the believers towards God.⁴¹ Talking about worship, he observed, "*Within the milieu of hierophany, the Pentecostals encounter and experience the divine.*"⁴²

Wacker, who describes himself as an "*half out and half in*" religious historian, detects the spiritual field in Pentecostalism and calls it "otherworldliness" or "primitivism."⁴³ It is the impulse to yearn for direct contact with the divine. Cox uses as similar term. The spiritual field is

³⁸ Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, Cambridge: University Press, 2004, p. 44.

³⁹ Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 121f; 142.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 181ff.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 226.

⁴³ Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003, pp. x, 11ff.

called “primal spirituality” in his remarkable book.⁴⁴ He shows how Pentecostals integrate different religious currents into their system. Such mechanisms have had some influence on Zionists, but will, I believe, shape Zionism in Africa still more in the future (more about that in the last chapter). Jacobson is not so fond of Cox grouping the Pentecostals into one camp with all other “experimentalists.”⁴⁵ His book elaborates on Pentecostalism’s gateway into the presence of God, the baptism in the Holy Spirit. As such, it is an emic and valid reflection of the movement’s early theologies. The scope of this study, however, elaborates the spiritual field, but subtracts the experience of a baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues, since these phenomena hardly occur among Malawi’s Zionists. Dayton uses a similar term, but the meaning is different. His Wesleyan “primitivistic motif” describes the longing for an original New Testament church, not any spiritual experiences per se.⁴⁶ Pentecostals called such restoration to Biblical roots “apostolic,” not primitivistic. Finally, Russel Spittler uses the term “overwhelming by the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁷ This expression portrays God as the initiator of the mystic encounter and as such stands on the other side of the spectrum, if seen from Albrecht’s anthropocentric viewpoint.

Spiritually, Pentecostals define the spiritual field primarily as the baptism in the Holy Spirit and its, as they say, evidence: speaking in tongues. Healing is subordinate to the baptism in the Spirit, for in general Pentecostals see the baptism in the Spirit as the key which opens the door to all other spiritual gifts, healings and miracles among them. Many Charismatics and Pentecostals alike have in the last twenty years become vitalized through worship music. Those churches with a lively worship ministry *sing* themselves into the spiritual field, wherein all other benefits from God will be received. Music plays a tremendous role to bring Malawian Zionists into God’s presence. Lucy Banda found this out among

⁴⁴ Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1995.

⁴⁵ Douglas Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003, p. 362.

⁴⁶ Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000, pp. 40f.

⁴⁷ Cited in Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999, pp. 241f.

the *Vapostoli* churches in the country, too, and has given a description which comes very close to my definition of the spiritual field: “*Therefore the Masowe apostles [sic!] women... take the congregation to the other world through singing.*”⁴⁸ Holiness believers, especially those that did not turn Pentecostal, held the spiritual field to be a definite, “second experience” (after conversion), which ushers them into a new nearness to God. Coming out of the holiness and healing movements, the early Zionists in the USA and Africa saw physical healing as the major manifestation of God’s presence. Contemporary African Zionists still emphasize this, but have added a few elements to it, of which dancing has risen most prominently, as we will see.

d. Anthropological Explanations

Anthropologists, sociologists and other related scientists have tried to come to terms with what I call the spiritual field. To African Zionists and to African participant researchers the spiritual field may be so natural and obvious that they could fail to describe it to outsiders. Other, more observant researchers with an etic perspective have struggled to see and describe the spiritual field. Zionists, for example, have been called “enthusiasts,” but such a definition is at best merely symptomatic.⁴⁹ Generally, the entire department of phenomenology deals with supernatural experiences, which constitute a world on their own.⁵⁰ This cannot mean that they are “unreal,” but that we are dealing with a reality of a different kind. The term ‘phenomenology of religion’ was coined by Chantepie de la Saussaye.⁵¹ Sometimes I get the impression that phenomenology is an academic discipline, which allows skeptics to become devotional! It constitutes a playground, on which anthropologists

⁴⁸ Lucy S. Banda, *The Masowe and Maranke Apostles in Malawi: Dynamics of the Entry, Growth, Development and Impact, 1950-2002*, MA, Zomba: University of Malawi, 2003, p. 39.

⁴⁹ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990 p. 170.

⁵⁰ Oliver Sacks, *Der Mann, der seine Frau mit einem Hut verwechselte*, Hamburg: Spiegel Verlag, 2007, p. 167.

⁵¹ Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 18.

can use scientific idioms to dare rather unscientific assumptions. Phenomenology allows one to talk about causes, which do not necessarily have material or direct links to their effects. For example, this study links the practical theology of faith healing practitioners from the USA to the mystic world of the Ngoni people, although they never had direct contact with each other. They touched and clasped spiritually, not face to face.

In anthropological literature, terms used when talking about the spiritual field are the very general “religious emotionalism,” and “mystical encounters.” More technical, rather observant terms are: “transcendental encounter,” “verticality,” and, borrowed from the theological camp, “immanency.” “Ritual field” sounds similar, but denotes something entirely different.⁵² The term *field* allows to extent the concept of ritual further, including the performance and utterances pertaining to it. It differs from the spiritual field in that it can do without any ‘vertical’ dimension. Durkheim called a heightened emotional state at ritual meetings “delirium,” his “collective effervescence” might sound better in French and is certainly to be preferred over any delirious state.⁵³ His classic and exclusively sociological explanation is this:

The very fact of assembling is an exceptionally powerful stimulant. Once the individuals are assembled, their proximity generates a kind of electricity that quickly transports them to an extraordinary degree of exaltation.⁵⁴

George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) was a social psychologist with theological roots at Oberlin College and studies under Georg Simmel in Berlin. According to Mead, religious emotions are generated by merging the *I* (the self-created part of one’s personality) with the *Me* (the self created by taking the attitude of others).⁵⁵ Any experience in this field would therefore presuppose a conscious, at least partial, yielding of

⁵² Jack D. Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion*, New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 128.

⁵³ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1964, p. 209.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

subjective control, giving way to group dynamics. New religious horizons are opening up if the group's emotional restraint is lower than the individual's. Durkheim's and Mead's explanations exclude, of course, any outside stimulants; all encounters are on a horizontal playing field.

Engelke discusses the "*problem of [God's] presence*" by way of its representation in a Zimbabwean AIC. As the title says, he is not so much discussing the spiritual field, but if it is and how God's presence can be represented.⁵⁶ Friedson investigated and participated in our traditional local scene and talks of an "*interior space*," in connection with Tumbuka possession dances. Possession means to be in that space, which is projected by music.⁵⁷ Nyau (secret male societies among the Chewa of Malawi) dances in Malawi have been described by Probst as a phenomenon which takes place in a ritual "*zone*."⁵⁸ In the chapter "Anthropology in Malawi," Martin Ott describes the purpose of *nyau* rituals, such as the dance *gule wamkulu*: "*...for the common belief seems to be that during the performance the dancers enter into the 'other' world, namely the sacred space of the original paradise.*"⁵⁹ Hurbon uses the term "*symbolic field*" when talking about Pentecostals in Latin America and the Caribbean.⁶⁰ This describes, however, a cosmological symbolism à la Douglas, not a spiritual location.⁶¹ Closer to this study's concept is Bastian who observed (in Costa Rica) a "*collective ecstasy*" in

⁵⁵ George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self & Society*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962, p. 274.

⁵⁶ Matthew Engelke, *A Problem of Presence. Beyond Scripture in an African Church*, Berkeley: University of California, 2007, pp. 28ff.

⁵⁷ Steven M. Friedson, *Dancing Prophets*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 22.

⁵⁸ Peter Probst, *Dancing Aids, Moral Discourses and Ritual Authority in Central Malawi*, Berlin: Institute für Ethnologie, Arbeitspapier no. 66, 1995, p. 4, in: Brian Morris, *Animals and Ancestors. An Ethnography*, Oxford: Berg, 2000, p. 151.

⁵⁹ Martin Ott, *African Theology in Images*, Zomba: Kachere-CLAIM, 2000, p. 181.

⁶⁰ Laënnec Hurbon, "Pentecostalism and Transnationalism in the Caribbean", in: André Corton, Ruth Marshall-Fratani, eds, *Between Babel and Pentecost*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001, pp. 128f.

⁶¹ Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, London: Routledge, 2003.

which participants “*are in search of ... a physical encounter with the divine.*”⁶²

⁶² Jean-Pierre Bastian, “Pentecostalism, Market Logic and Religious Transnationalisation in Costa Rica”, in: André Corton, Ruth Marshall-Fratani, eds, *Between Babel and Pentecost*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001, p. 170.

2. Origins in Exile: American Roots, Ngoni Mfecane and Machona Labour Migration

“...any movement that promises to provide or to renew certainty has a ready market.”¹

1. American Roots: Slavery, Pentecostalism and John Alexander Dowie

a. *Slave Religion*

“In the United States the gods of Africa died.”²

We begin in Africa. For thousands of years, the people of West Africa, their nations, tribes and clans, have worshipped their gods in manifold ways. Contrary to east Africa, where monotheism seemed to have been the standard throughout, the west of the continent saw a much wider array of deities in its pantheon. African worship included shrines, temples, sacred trees and mystic pools, all of which speak of locality. Land, and the ownership of it, is much more important than just gaining a livelihood from it. The soil holds spiritual powers. It's the ancestors that rain down on it in the form of water; it is the sacredness of trees and streams, which bind the soul to the soil. Living in a spiritual universe, the African of old did not distinguish between a material and spiritual world. Everything was imbued with spiritual power; spirits could manifest themselves in all kinds of forms and shapes. African people 'see' these spiritual things, perhaps not unlike a nurse who 'sees' bacteria although they are certainly not visible to the natural eye. This awareness of bacteria helps the nurse to behave in a certain hygienic way. In the same way, traditional African worshippers perceive a spiritual universe all around them. Fears have

¹ Peter Berger, *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999, p. 7.

² Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 86.

brought about taboos, tensions have led to atonements and apprehensiveness has called for sacrifice. African religions were not only oral; this reduction came later in the dark holds of the ships crossing the Atlantic and during the meagerness of slavery. The expressiveness, which, of course, can still be found on the entire continent and the Gulf of Guinea in particular, speaks of religion lived in words, songs, sculptures, paintings, carvings, embroidery, metal works, pottery and ... everything else, too. These people, before they were captured and ferried off to distant shores, had a common practice of spirit possession, too, for belief in the spirits presupposes such psychic experiences.³ Spells, dances and drumbeats could induce a medium to become possessed by an ancestral or other prominent spirit. They would thus leave the physical realm and enter a *spiritual field*, which was, as the name says, entirely spiritual and only accessible by the spirit of man. This might sound very experimental, but was strongly held by traditions, as spirit mediums gained their authority by speaking on behalf of those who had gone before, the shades, the ancestors. Those experiences can be called non-Christian mysticism. Adherents of African cults stepped into the spiritual field where they felt the spirits, stood in awe of their gods, saw visions in their trances and groped their way through a gallery of ancestors. I will now try to trace the development of the spiritual field from Africa to America, how it became part of a Christian tradition in the New World, how it impacted Pentecostalism and made its way into Zionism.

Slavery brought an end to much of African religion among the slaves. They lost their localities and sacred lands. Enslavers made sure that no African culture or language would reblossom, as they saw it as a unifying element among the Africans.⁴ Neither is it an entirely new phenomenon that the conquered begin to worship the god of their conquerors. "*In the United States the gods of Africa died.*"⁵ Instead of them, the Christian God

³ Traugott K. Oesterreich, *Possession, Demonical and Other, among Primitive Races in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Modern Times*, Cedar Knolls: Wehman Brothers, 1974, p. 377.

⁴ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

came to be worshipped in cotton row. This, however, does not mean that Africans were stripped entirely of their cultural heritage once they had arrived in the Americas. I side with Herskovitz in the debate whether the American Africans have no past, as his opponent Frazier contended, or if there were and still are African elements in the Afro-American conscience and culture.⁶ For this, Herskovitz shows that (a) Afro-Americans (he uses this term) have never resigned to their fate as slaves, moreover, most of them displayed a stronger moral attitude than the slave holders; (b) not only the poorer stock of African population was captured and ferried across the ocean; (c) Africans upheld and learned anew ways of communication and cultural practices in the New World and (d) African cultures were not so inferior that they were immediately swallowed up by the “superior” European culture in America.⁷ On the contrary, white people assimilated black practices, too, and the black population Africanized European elements.⁸ Raboteau tries to reconcile Herskovitz and Frazier by recognizing the true aspects of both theories. While Africa influenced black and white culture in the USA, especially in the religious/musical realm, it still remains true that African customs and rituals did not last in the USA as they have in the Caribbean and in Brazil.⁹

This study concentrates on the theological aspects of Black heritage. According to W.E.B. Du Bois, the three characteristics of slave religion were the preacher, the music and the frenzy and shouting.¹⁰ All of this is oral culture and all of it leads to or expresses the spiritual field, that entering of mystical union with God. Many slaves were illiterate, so oral religion was the only path left to them. Moreover, the slaves felt a dislike

⁶ Melville Herskovitz, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1958. E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America*, New York: Schocken Books, 1964. Raboteau gives further references to the debate in his book *Slave Religion* on p. 336.

⁷ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980, pp. 48ff.

⁸ Susanne Everett, *History of Slavery*, Leicester: Magna Books, 1978, pp. 226ff.

⁹ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 86.

¹⁰ William E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Chicago, 1903, New York: Fawcett Publications, 1968, p. 141. He expressed these thoughts for the first time in an essay called “The Faith of the Fathers,” written in 1901.

concerning their masters' religion; they called them "Bible Christians."¹¹ They didn't want to be like those and instead claimed direct inspiration from God into their hearts.¹² Their expression of feelings, however, was denied to a degree by their white overlords, too. Drums were forbidden to all Africans throughout the antebellum South. Before the Civil War, beating a drum was punishable by death. One consequence of this was that other instruments had to make do as rhythm devices, e.g. the guitar.¹³

The trauma of being enslaved only added to the wish to leave these earthly fields. People would resort to the spiritual field if the shackles were too strong, the walls too high and the dogs too fierce to thwart any other escape. Zuesse states that possession experiences are more common to societies with slaves, or dense populations with strict social classifications. The often lifelong cementation of social roles leads to attempts to flee from all restrictions.¹⁴ If this is not possible in the physical realm, then people are more willing to go on spiritual journeys. We keep in mind that the following reports come from slave services before the Pentecostal revival broke out in Los Angeles, in 1907.

Looking back at these secret and risky religious gatherings, an ex-slave declared, "*Meetings back there meant more than they do now. Then everybody's heart was in tune, and when they called on God they made heaven ring.*" Truly communal, these meetings...needed no preacher because "*everyone was so anxious to have a word to say that a preacher did not have a chance.*"¹⁵

On Sundays they had meetin', sometimes at our house,
sometimes at 'nother house...They'd preach and pray and
sing – shout, too. I heard them git up with a powerful force

¹¹ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980, pp. 242f.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 242.

¹³ Corey Harris, Blues: Kotipaluu Part 1/7. Yle Teema (Finish documentary TV broadcast), 29.8.2008, 21.45.

¹⁴ Evan M. Zuesse, *Ritual Cosmos. The Sanctification of Life in African Religions*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985, p. 187.

¹⁵ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 217.

of the spirit, clappin' they hands and walin' round the place. They'd shout, 'I go the glory. I got that old time 'ligion in my heart.' I seen some powerful 'figurations of the spirit in them days.¹⁶

There were then, prior to the Azusa Street Revival in 1907, Pentecostal meetings, experiences and phenomena among the Black Christians in the USA, during slavery and after the Civil War, too. The main ingredient and purpose of most of those meetings was the spiritual field. Before we look into how black Christians changed the spiritual field, it will be worthwhile to see that the phenomenon exists to this very day. Raboteau states that it is possible for a Brazilian member of the Umbanda cult or for a Santeria adherent from Cuba to recognize *"when the lead singer of a North American gospel group has 'caught a spirit'..."*¹⁷

The contribution from Christian slaves to the spiritual field is twofold. First, their group dynamics brought mystical experiences out of solitary confinement and integrated them into the social fabric of the Christian churches. This was immediately the case and accepted among black Christians, but it took the Pentecostal movement to give it a global breakthrough. Other movements, such as the Shakers, entered the spiritual field in groups, too, but their legacy is all but dead. Nowadays, the Shakers are better known for furniture making than for any spiritual contribution they might have made. Secondly, the conversion experience checked or even ended ancestral and territorial spirit possession among the slaves, but took the concept of the spiritual field into the realm of Christian orthodoxy. Christianity and culture cross-fertilized each other, something that is well accepted when European seminarians talk about the Hebrew roots of the New Testament congregation or the Greek influence on the apostolic church. But missiology has not stopped there. African cultures colour Christianity, too; thank God they do. To some this might smack too much of henotheism and, to employ another word whose concept is often not understood by its users, syncretism. Did those

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

black Christians in the USA make the fatal mistake to just insert a different god into an otherwise pagan ritual? Are Pentecostals and Zionists, who frolic in the spiritual field, really filled with the Holy Spirit, is this not a “spirit from below,” as many German evangelicals judged when they watched the first Pentecostals ‘under the power.’¹⁸ Now, I have neither motivation nor discernment to judge every spirit. Yet I want to show that those experiences of the slaves, Zionists and Pentecostals *can* certainly be authentically Christian by nature; on the following grounds: The opposite of Bible-abiding Christianity is not an experience-orientated faith. The opposite of a faith that is grounded in the Word of God is simply disobedience and the alternative to faith-inspiring experiences is dull boredom. Sometimes spiritual experiences are given a negative stigma, especially evangelical circles tend to antagonize such experiences with ‘the Word.’ However, to be honest, every encounter with God is an experience. If such happens during Bible reading then it will be an experience with the Word, but an experience nevertheless. The fear is an experience which is contradictory to the Word, that Christians become ecstatic and leave the biblical foundation of their faith. The Zionist and Pentecostal movements are not emphasizing experience over and against the Bible, as some evangelical commentators have stated. I do not say that extravaganzas never happened, but that the main accusation is not factual; it is a misunderstanding concerning the nature of these movements as such. Zionists and Pentecostals, especially the early ones, tended to be extreme. They were extreme with their experiences and, that might come as a surprise to some, they were extreme in their adherence to the Bible, too. Malawi’s Zionists, as will be seen, are so eager in obeying the Bible that it borders on Biblicism. The ‘balance,’ which evangelicals have so often called for, is existent among Zionists and Pentecostals. Theirs is a balance of extremes.

It is, however, not terminology which made the slaves’ experience within the spiritual field Christian, but their conversion experience.¹⁹ This

¹⁸ Ludwig Eisenlöffel, *Bis alle eins werden, Siebzig Jahre Berliner Erklärung und ihre Folgen*, Erzhausen: Leuchter, 1979.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

had not been from Africa; neither is conversion known in West Africa's traditional religions.²⁰ Early Methodism, Pietism and the Baptist churches had conversion as one of their hallmarks, and from there it infiltrated North American Protestantism. A man who is kept as slave knows, much better than a free man, the longing to be free, and the fear of making the attempt. It is like trying to get religion, and not seeing the way to escape condemnation. *"The decision to escape, like the experience of conversion, might involve a prolonged struggle, an emotional and psychological 'wrestling' which is suddenly overcome in the experience of 'coming through'."*²¹ Moreover, such a breakthrough experience legitimized joy, exhilaration, shouting, dreams, visions and trance, all elements that had been part of their lives on the mother continent and, as some might argue, is still part of their inherent religious fabric. A sister in Zion had this to say about her weekly encounters with the Divine: *"I like everything in St. John's because when the people preach, you can feel it in your blood. You can feel it in your blood when they sing. You can feel the spirit."*²² Even African Anglicans, who worship in High Church style, did not need to be taught about God's presence in their meetings: *"It would seem that the transcendence of God was taken for granted, carried over from traditional understandings..."*²³

Conversion, then, changed the content of the spiritual field, but retained its outer frame. It gave access to God's grace in a short-cut way, if compared to catechism classes, which were often not more than an effort to overcome illiteracy by way of religious instructions. Seen from the other side, would it be improbable for God, who sees that his black enslaved children have now come under the lordship of Christ, to fill them with his Holy Spirit? After that, the indwelling of the Spirit should not be confused with the way they expressed it. Once converted, most slaves

²⁰ Tokunboh Adeyemo, *Salvation in African Tradition*, Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House, 1997, pp. 15ff.

²¹ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 305.

²² Mama Joxo as quoted in: Linda E. Thomas, *Under the Canopy*, Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1999, p. 54.

²³ Helen E.P. van Koevering, *Dancing their Dreams. The Lakeshore Nyanja Women of the Anglican Diocese of Niassa*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005, p. 63.

lived faithfully to their new Lord. They did so because they saw Him different from their earthly lords; over and against them they perceived God as a loving father and Jesus as their emphatic brother.²⁴ To the slaves, Christianity made sense.

The differences between Protestant Christianity and African religious belief were, of course, much more numerous and much more important than the similarities, but there were enough similarities to make it possible for slaves to find some common ground between the beliefs of their ancestors and those of the white Christians. The theory that African acceptance of Christianity required the adoption of a totally alien world view needs therefore to be modified.²⁵

More differences between the Christian spiritual field and mystic experiences in primal religions can be found. The spiritual field is more constructive within Christianity (1.Cor.14:3). This constructive element was added to the religious repertoire of the slaves, too. Apart from all outer manifestations, there is, in most cases, some content of revelation conveyed, which benefits the believer long after the dust has settled on the spiritual field. Lewis compares, on a different argument, the Christian Indian Shakers' worship style in the USA with traditional spirit-induced manifestations among the Samburu men of Kenya. The outer expressions of entering the spiritual field are similar to both groups. Those Shakers used the physical experience of the power of God to validate the truth of their revelations, whereas for the Samburu, similar manifestations do not hold any mystical implications.²⁶

The last mark that differentiates the Christian experience of the slaves from their former traditional African notions is in the nature of spirit possession. One has to differentiate between controlled and uncontrolled forms of spirit possession. Initial encounters with spirits are often

²⁴ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 299.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

²⁶ Ioan M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, London: Penguin Books, n. d. p. 45.

traumatic. Malawians of Tumbuka origin call such a state *nthenda*, sickness. After that, the afflicted person might get used to the spirits and graduate with control over them. Possession then moves into more beneficial ways. However, those Tumbuka afflicted by *vimbuza* spirits are not always in control of them. They can be troubled unto death.²⁷ On the extreme end we can find shamanism, especially in Nordic countries. Shamans among the Eskimos have to surrender their own soul in Faustian fashion. Compare such extremes to spiritual experiences within Zionism and Pentecostalism and one can see an entirely different story. The transition was made, I believe, when black slaves became Christians.

b. Pentecostalism

“The Pentecostal wine, fermented in America,
bottled on the mission field,
has been uncorked with dazzling success in the Third World.”²⁸

To the USA, the 19th and early 20th century was like a huge cauldron of religious ingredients, which blended and separated, some parts never to surface again and other parts, especially when the cauldron bubbled over in revivalistic fashion, came to stay for a very long time. Everything seemed to be there, and all elements in this religious ferment rubbed shoulders with each other: stiff European traditions, ethnic peculiarities, millennialism, Sabbathism, many other isms and, common to most of them, a fresh pinch of American free enterprise.²⁹ The autonomy of local churches was a common landmark. Those churches which allowed freedom of expression in worship felt drawn toward Methodist groups with an emphasis on holiness.³⁰ Pietism came to look quite emotional when seen against a background of cold-molded orthodox Lutheranism. The Pentecostals hatched from the holiness and healing camps, attracting disgruntled Methodists and revived Baptists “seeking for more.”

²⁷ Steven M. Friedson, *Dancing Prophets*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 25.

²⁸ Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003, p. 268.

²⁹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, New York: Maryknoll, 1992, p. 329.

³⁰ Cheryl J. Sanders, *Saints in Exile*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 18.

California was still a novel place in the beginning of the 20th century. It was the West, not yet completely tamed. There met treasure hunters and gold washers, cowboys and future wine growers. It drew rootless, abandoned and persecuted people from East Asia, former slaves from a discoloured Confederation, immigrants from Europe, and, to this day, impoverished Central and South Americans. To most of them, this new home was nonetheless a Diaspora. Sociologically, a common language still had to be found. Ecclesiastically, hundreds of Christian traditions met, survived or withered after the first generation had gone. The Diaspora is an ideal breeding ground for new religious movements.³¹ The more elements the Diaspora encompasses, the wider its appeal.

Pentecostalism's initial spark was indeed a form of African American religion. The first leader, William Seymour, was the son of former slaves. His congregation met in a remodeled stable in Los Angeles. Journalists, who first reported the strange happenings, drew sneering comparisons with southern antebellum religion.³² Hollenweger, who knows his subject, postulates that Azusa was nothing but an "*enthusiastischer Ausbruch unter Schwarzen*" (an enthusiastic outburst among Blacks).³³ This might be as derogatory as it sounds, but true nevertheless.³⁴ Early Pentecostalism was, in some aspects, a successor to Christian slave religion.³⁵ The movement bolstered two African elements, the spiritual field and oral culture, which were at the same time even more transformed into a new, Christian culture. The spiritual field was given dogmatic verification - "the baptism in the Holy Spirit." This entrance experience opened up a whole new world to the believer, one spiritual

³¹ Harry R. Boer, *Pentecost and Missions*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961, p. 117.

³² Charles Parham, ed., *Apostolic Faith*, Kansas, October 1912, p. 6. Quoted in: Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003, p. 232.

³³ Walter J. Hollenweger, *Enthusiastisches Christentum. Die Pfingstbewegung in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Wuppertal: Theologischer Verlag Rolf Brockhaus, 1969, p. 25.

³⁴ For a similar conclusion regarding Pentecostalism in Ghana, see David M. Beckmann, *Eden Revival: Spiritual Churches in Ghana*, St. Louis: Concordia, 1975. In: Allan Anderson, *Zion and Pentecost*, Pretoria: UNISA, 2000, p. 80.

³⁵ Iain MacRobert, *The Black Roots and White Racism of Early Pentecostalism in the USA*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988, p. 9.

mode of existence, wherein the spirit-filled Christian would be closer to Christ, victorious over temptations, emboldened to evangelize and equipped with supernatural gifts for ministry. These ends justified the means, even if they should include some excessive emotional flare-ups. The second element, oral culture, came to the forefront at Azusa, not so much as a dogma but in the ecclesiastic set up of the congregation. The Spirit's inspiration now entitled everybody in the congregation to testify, evangelize, speak in tongues, prophesy and preach. This forbade any liturgy, which was seen as a man-planned interference with the Spirit. Moreover, oral inspiration initially did away with all titles and their underlying clericalism in the church. Seymour and other leaders were addressed as "brother." Azusa was, however, much more than a "black outburst." Within days, white people flocked to the church and within a year, white bishops would sail over from Europe to experience their own, personal Pentecost. Before that, there had been singular incidents of Europeans praying with Black Christians.³⁶ Yet there hadn't been any spiritual cross-fertilization on a massive scale, no racially reconciled denominations had seen the light of day. Within those same twelve months, already more than fifty missionaries had gone through Azusa and spread the flames of a new Pentecost across the globe. The modern Pentecostal movement has thus been a cultural catalyst, too. It is, in this way, the africanization of global Christianity. So strange is the concept not, Elvis Presley, "*who emerged from white Pentecostalism*," did the same to music what Pentecostals did to Christianity: he africanized it.³⁷ Talking about music, Harvey Cox sums it up,

Neither jazz nor Pentecostalism is a purely African invention, though both are now spreading through Africa. But neither jazz nor Pentecostalism would have been possible without the influence of the distinctively African American

³⁶ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 137.

³⁷ Cheryl J. Sanders, *Saints in Exile*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 83.

experience of resisting oppression through exuberant worship.³⁸

Little over one hundred years have passed since Azusa, and the movement has 461 million adherents worldwide.³⁹ It features Baptist tenets, holiness teaching, Methodist sanctification, healing theology, evangelistic and missionary thrust, millennialism and much more. The revival initially did what no other power had ever been able to do: it reconciled the racial divide.⁴⁰ Early Pentecostalism was not just another denomination. It was an event, an atmosphere to live in, a total way of life. Pentecostalism is a lot, but for our interest we will note that the African elements in it, oral culture and the spiritual field, had been given prominence in the revival and have thus been introduced to and accepted by a global multitude of believers. For example, I joined a Pentecostal church when 14 years old in northern Germany. This is an area not exactly known as an ecstatic El Dorado, but there it was: shouting and spontaneous emotional manifestations during conversion, testimonies and loud 'Amens' from the congregation in every service and, mostly during the prayer meetings on Monday evenings, the breakthrough into the presence of God, here called the spiritual field. These manifestations, or rather the framework in which they could take place, had come from Africa to the north German plain, via Azusa Street in the USA!⁴¹

True, there have been, outside of Africa, emotional outbursts in Christian churches, and something like a "History of Emotional Faith" has even been written.⁴² But differences prevail: in the pre-Pentecostalism era, emotionalism was an extra-auxiliary and often short-lived birth pang

³⁸ Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1995, p. 145.

³⁹ This estimate is from 1998, conservative and non-pentecostalic. David B. Barratt, Todd Johnson, "Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 1998," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Grass Roots Publishing, 1998, Vol. 22/1, p. 26.

⁴⁰ Ulf Strohhorn, *Pentecostalism in Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005, pp. 23f.

⁴¹ Iain MacRobert, *The Black Roots and White Racism of Early Pentecostalism in the USA*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988, p. 31.

⁴² This is the heading of the third chapter in Patrick Dixon's book. *Signs of Revival*, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1994.

in a new movement, e.g. Methodism. It carried little weight, was hardly ever theologically justified and soon came to be a bit of an embarrassment. The draft of Schleiermacher's theology of emotionalism, or such faint calls by the late Karl Barth, ("*A bit of Pentecostalism is the salt of the earth and cannot do us any harm... It is important that there should be people who rejoice in God.*")⁴³ could not overcome the inhibiting and intellectual ballast, which the Enlightenment had loaded onto European Christianity. Neither has the enthusiastic element come into Pentecostalism through the Roman Catholic root (and via Methodism), as Hollenweger assumes by ascribing a dual worldview and crisis moments as part of their heritage.⁴⁴ If that be the case, then the southern half of Europe should have been frolicking in the spiritual field and have no need for Pentecostalism. Those Methodist powers had long worn off before 1907 (and the same must be said about emotionalism among the Pietists). It was all too early and had expired by the time the Pentecostals entered the stage. Mysticism was almost always an individual experience, whereas group forces were in power among Africans and Pentecostals. The first and second generation of Pentecostals had an antipathy toward Roman Catholic religiosity. That was the last camp they wanted to be associated with.⁴⁵

God often works through paradoxes. In this case, Christianity has been offered freedom from emotional conventionalism through African elements working within global Pentecostalism. If credit is due, then it must go to those slaves, who fused their emotional expressions with faith in Jesus Christ. Looking at South African Zionism, Sundkler could already see the link in 1948, although he did not name it as a black root nor Pentecostalism: The spiritual field as such is described only as "emotionalism," but as to its origin, he writes, "*there are some influences*

⁴³ Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth. His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994, p. 492. Barth spoke those words at the end of his life, in December 1967, at the invitation of Mennonites in Bienenberg, Switzerland.

⁴⁴ Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism. Origins and Developments Worldwide*, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997, pp. 144.

⁴⁵ Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below. Early Pentecostals and American Culture*, Harvard: University Press, 2001, p. 182.

*of American sawdust-trail technique in the emotionalism of the independent Church.”*⁴⁶

It is now time to make a proclamation. I would like to add another AIC! The spiritual field demands a classification for *African Influenced Churches*. (I do not seriously aspire to make this another label. The confusion is already there, this is not an addition to an already messy academic discussion.) But for credit's sake, the African Influenced Churches need to be recognized and they in turn need to recognize their own roots. Pentecostal churches in Africa, charismatic congregations in Croydon, London, neo-Pentecostals in Jakarta, charismatic renewal ministries within the Roman Catholic Church in Brisbane, Australia; Brazilian enthusiasts and Scottish glossolalists, they all have a common African heritage. The spiritual field has become phenomenal globalization par excellence. Isn't this the paradox, that of all people Africans, who went through serial traumata for the last five hundred years (slavery, colonialism, apartheid, and genocides), can stand up and teach the rest of the world something about the Joy of the Lord, how to express happiness and how to not be ashamed of the Gospel? Of all people, Africans know what *theologia crucis* means, how it feels like. However, when God permits a cross, the outpouring of his Spirit is not long in the waiting.

c. John Alexander Dowie

“He is coming, he is coming!

Dr John Alexander Dowie, restorer of the church in Zion, is coming.”⁴⁷

Zionists do not stem from Israel. Neither has the movement anything to do with Theodor Herzl's Zionism, which sought and fulfilled the Jews' desire to establish a State of Israel in its ancient location. A historical connection there is not, but phenomenological parallels do exist. I will later point out some spiritual facets of both movements and how they draw their legitimizations from the same source.

⁴⁶ Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, London: OUP, 1961, p. 200.

⁴⁷ James Joyce, *Ulysses*, London: Picador, 1998, p. 144.

African and Malawian Zionism originate from a town called *Zion* in Illinois, north of Chicago, USA. That is where John Alexander Dowie, born in Scotland in 1847, settled in the beginning of the last century.⁴⁸ He was often sick as a child.⁴⁹ Dowie's family left for Australia where he, still a young man, became a preacher of the Congregational Church. Eight years later he left that church because he believed to have received the gift of healing. He founded his own ministry, called *The International Divine Healing Association*. A temple was built in Melbourne and some isolated revivals sprung up, centered around the belief in physical healing. This is historically important for Dowie seems to have been the first to believe and practice physical healing in the 19th century. He is a re-discoverer of this biblical truth and practice. The healing and miracles described in the New Testament were taken as literal accounts.

The simplest, least complicated explanation of the healings of Jesus is that they happened as described, and my own recent experience, as well as that of countless other Christians, goes to back up that explanation.⁵⁰

Dowie would have certainly confirmed MacNutt's statement. After the New Testament era, the most significant change in the field of healing occurred around the fourth century AD. Earlier, healing had been considered as God's ordinary will for man, while from that time on, sickness came to be viewed as God's plan for man, one's cross to bear.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Gordon Lindsay, *John Alexander Dowie. A Life Story of Trials, Tragedies and Triumphs*, Dallas, 1980. David W. Faupel, *Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought*, Sheffield: Academic Press, 1996, pp. 121-135.

⁴⁹ Edith L. Blumhofer, "Dowie, John Alexander", Stanley M. Burgess, Gary B. McGee, eds., *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, pp. 248f.

⁵⁰ Francis MacNutt, *Healing*, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1983, p. 30f.

⁵¹ Morton Kelsey, *Healing and Christianity*, New York: Harper and Row, 1973, pp. 10 ff.

In the 18th century, the medical ministry, especially in missions, came to be regarded as a 'symbolic' continuation of Christ's healing works.⁵²

Dowie never lacked controversy, neither was he ever short of adversaries. He left for the USA in 1888. Pastures were greener there. His ministry centered in the state of Illinois, but had nationwide repercussions. The church he founded in 1895 was called *The Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion* (CCACZ). He is literally immortalized by being mentioned in *Ulysses*, which speaks of some recognition by secular society.⁵³ Dowie stood for the reformation of, as he saw it, fossilized Christendom toward a simple, New Testament faith. The means for his objective were his two "discoveries", faith healing and the reinstallation of the apostolic ministry. About the first it can be said that Dowie was indeed successful with his emphasis on Christ the Healer. He formed the vanguard of the modern faith healing movement in the USA, together with A.B. Simpson and Sister Elisabeth Mix, of African origin.⁵⁴ They all were inspired by reports or even visits to the German Pfarrer Blumhardt, who had a widely known ministry in healing and exorcism. Dowie's unrelenting faith in healing forbade all other cures. One of his famous sermons was titled, "*Doctors, Drugs and Devils; or the Foes of Christ the Healer.*" To him, the deadliest threat was the "*bacillis lunaticus medicus.*"⁵⁵ Dowie's healing ministry was a closed system. His medical philosophy came from spiritual reflection; Zion's alternative healing stems from its alternative theology. The church provided the frame and reason for healing; medical practices did not run off on their own. It was, in a way, the attempt to totally merge church and medicine. Both, Dowie's successes and the eventual disintegration of his domain must be

⁵² Markku Hokkanen, "Scottish Missionaries and African Healers: Perceptions and Relations in the Livingstonia Mission, 1875-1930", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 34, no. 3, Leiden: Brill, 2004, pp. 321f.

⁵³ James Joyce, *Ulysses*, London: Picador, 1998, p. 144.

⁵⁴ Klaus Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions*, Oxford: Regnum, 1994, pp. 41ff. Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, Cambridge: University Press, 2004, p. 31.

⁵⁵ *Leaves of Healing*, June 14, 1895, p. 563. Quoted in: Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003, p. 191.

attributed to this merger. Here we have a striking parallel, an unbroken historical thread, because Malawian Zionism thrives on and suffers under the same theme to this day.

Secondly, Dowie's emphasis on the apostolic office certainly had its biblical veracity, but failed when he made himself the center of it. He came to regard himself as Moses come alive and wore the full regalia of the Old Testament High Priest (which Moses never did). The office of Old Testament priest, of course, embodied the merger of religion and medicine like nothing else. He carried an impressive staff and wore a patriarchal beard. Later he took on another role, Elijah the Restorer and Elijah III. There was no formally organized evangelical fellowship among the believers in the USA at that time, but a sense of brotherhood prevailed across the denominations. They increasingly looked at Dowie with contempt. It is this assumption, to be Elijah III, which made him look as if he had spun out of control and arrived at the mainstream's periphery.⁵⁶ All dietary laws from Leviticus and Deuteronomy were observed in Zion. Baptism was administered through threefold immersion. However, the self-styled apostle rejected other gifts of the Holy Spirit, e.g. speaking in tongues. He did not see man and woman as equal before God, or at least not equal in the ministry. Nevertheless, Dowie was, for his time, remarkably anti-racist. He had, what we today call globalization, firmly on his mind. His Zion near Chicago was supposed to be only the first among many. A Zion in Africa was planned; all worldwide settlements should culminate in a Zion to be built in Jerusalem, which would then usher in the second coming of Christ. Africans were to be part of Zion International. Dowie held views, which stood in sharp contrast to the racism of other, more southern and white church leaders.⁵⁷ In his *Leaves of Healing*, he castigated the British for their colonial treatment of Africans. Remarkably, Dowie encouraged interracial marriage.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003, p. 156.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

⁵⁸ James R. Goff, *Fields White unto Harvest*, University of Arkansas, 1998, pp. 108-112. In: Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003, p. 232. See

He himself signed ordination certificates for the first black ministers in Africa.⁵⁹ The picture shows him in High priestly regalia.⁶⁰

One word came to my mind when studying the biography of this man: restlessness. John A. Dowie had an outer restlessness, exemplified by his biography on three continents; moreover, he undertook long journeys to Europe, China, Japan and Mexico. This was fired by an inner restlessness, which made Dowie a theological collector, an apt organizer, a disaster when delegating skills were needed and yet a powerful and unrelenting leader. We remain within our broader headline of exilic religion when talking about John Alexander Dowie. He was a wanderer, but found his own solution to the problem of the exile, which has since then been imitated



around the world and in Malawi, too. Dowie “invented” healing homes, where patients could withdraw from everyday life, “tarry on the Lord,” immerse themselves in faith-building Bible studies and receive healing prayers from their leaders. Thousands found healing and spiritual restoration in such places. Testimonies of physical healings were published in *Leaves of Healing*. These were not only read on the American continent, but found their way to Africa, too. In the USA at that time, other well known places were Charles Cullis’s Faith Cure House in Boston

also Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, Cambridge: University Press, 2004, p. 32.

⁵⁹ Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000, p. 236.

⁶⁰ Source: http://www.james-joyce-music.com/cd_jewelcase2.html. 22.11.2007.

and A.B. Simpson's Berachah House in New York City. However, Dowie's great poke into the eye of the exile was the vision of a Christian settlement, Zion City. His association bought 4500 hectares land north of Chicago, where from 1888 on the saints began to settle in their thousands. He envisioned a *City of God*, which would foreshadow heavenly conditions already on earth. All inhabitants would be born again Christians. No alcohol was allowed for sale or consumption, even a cigarette stump should not be found on Zion's streets. There was no pharmacy, neither was any medical doctor allowed to open a surgery. Many laws from Leviticus, up to that point of time only implemented among the Jews, now became the rule of the day in this Protestant settlement. No pork was allowed. Men were advised to follow Biblical standards and not shave their beards. The Sunday was kept, and kept sabbathically. One could get arrested for whistling on Zion's streets on a Sunday! The bulk of Zion's society was comprised of poor people and the lower working-class.⁶¹ All this, as we will see in chapter 6, has been undertaken in Malawi, too, almost one hundred years later and with Malawian protagonists.

At first, Dowie's gigantic utopia went off well. Many godly men and women lived in Zion; it became a cradle for infant Pentecostalism in the USA, too. Dowie died in 1907, worn out and heavily burdened by a work load he was not willing to share.⁶² That year, Zion's population stood at 7000.⁶³ Dowie's succession in Zion was disputed and six groups went their separate ways. If Zionism has a tendency for sectarianism, then it was already inherent in the American mother church. The year of his death was the year of the birth of Pentecostalism in Los Angeles.

Dowie was against all kinds of "*excessive emotionalism*."⁶⁴ People "*who saw visions had to be,*" to quote the words of a famous German

⁶¹ Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985, p. 179.

⁶² Gordon P. Gardiner, *Out of Zion into all the World*, Shippensburg, PA: Companion Press, 1990.

⁶³ Oswald Eggenberger, "Dowie, John Alexander", Kurt Galling, ed., *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 2 vol., 1986, p. 258.

⁶⁴ Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985, p. 185.

chancellor, “*confined to a mental asylum.*”⁶⁵ Dowie did not believe in speaking in tongues, neither was he given to prophecy. Yet Zion, Illinois, had a spiritual field. Healing is the spiritual field *par excellence*. It is here where God can be physically felt; the palpable merger of spiritual and physical forces. Immanency was longed for and achieved when John Alexander Dowie stepped down from his pulpit and laid hands on the sick. Indoors, the church in Illinois was permanently decorated with canes and crutches, splints and casts, artificial limbs and wheelchairs. Those were leftovers of healed visitors and thus served as relics of divine power, a neatly ordered display which showed that the apostolic age had come again. Such a treasure, however, could not be thrown into the gutter. Dowie prayed over Christians, especially those who had settled at Zion, but he was not willing to lay hands on unbelievers. They might have been just after physical betterment. Dowie’s attitude is common to all early faith healers during that time, and can be found in Pentecostalism, too. There is a christocentric emphasis on Jesus as Healer. Fearing sensationalism, spiritism and quackery alike, their motto was to seek the Healer, not the healing. This attitude is still prevalent in African and Malawian Zionism, where it has been honed to perfection as a recruiting device: join our church, and we will pray over you. One of Dowie’s elders in Illinois, John G. Lake, later became a leading revivalist at Azusa.⁶⁶ He is the catalyst who changed his stand on healing prayer for unbelievers, and with that, for all of southern African Pentecostals.⁶⁷ Lake sailed from Azusa to South Africa in 1908 and there he used the gifts of healing and miracles as a tool in evangelism. Many of those unbelievers, once healed, joined his Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa. However, most African Zionists side with Dowie, not Lake. They still don’t pray over non-members. Zionists in Africa still follow Dowie’s example of healing homes, too, although the concept was not foreign to traditional African healing cults. Zionists take a lot of time to pray over and nurse the sick. Such healing homes are not unknown with Pentecostals, even in Malawi, but

⁶⁵ Chancellor Helmut Schmidt in an interview, n. d.

⁶⁶ Gloria Copeland, ed., *John G. Lake*, Fort Worth: Kenneth Copeland Publications, 1995.

⁶⁷ Ulf Strohhorn, *Pentecostalism in Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere, 2002, pp. 25ff.

they are less common in comparison with the Zionists. Pentecostals like things quick. They love “instant healing miracle crusades,” whereas the Zionists are not so short-breathed as they wait upon the Lord. In the early days, Zion’s spiritual field was restricted to healing. Since then it has been extended, as we will see.

Dowie did not contribute much to oral culture. Many markers of Azusa were absent in Illinois, such as audience participation, spontaneous prophesying, unscheduled preaching by untrained preachers, uncalled clapping, Spirit-hymns and services without anyone in charge. Drumming and dancing was unknown in American Zionism and early South African Zionism, too. In short, Zion Illinois was not influenced by Black culture. However, Dowie started a visual expression of faith, which sold like hot cake once it had arrived in Africa. His high-priestly role and attire led to the introduction of bulging robes and colourful ornaments in the church. The beards and staffs, common markers among Africa’s Zionists, have their origin with Dowie, who looked like a mixture of Old Testament patriarch and Santa Claus. Dowie borrowed elements from the Old Testament and certainly eyed Roman Catholic and Anglican customs, for the hierarchy of the CCACZ has no immediate Biblical origin. This outer appearance was not so unique if compared to the Greek Orthodox or Roman Catholic Church, but it certainly stood out among North American evangelicals and other free Protestants.

d. Infancies of Pentecostalism and Zionism

Why talk about Pentecostalism if we are looking at the Zionists, especially since the latter came first? (Dowie died in the same year the Azusa Street revival burst upon the scene). Because both movements are intrinsically linked, both in the USA and in Africa. First, Zion and Pentecost were not that separate in their infancies in the USA. It is important to understand the scene, upon which both movements burst around the turn to the 20th century. There was a certain atmosphere, one spiritual primordial soup, from which both movements sprung. They still share their most distinctive tenets, the spiritual field and (in Africa) the predominance of oral culture. Coming to this continent, we will see that the early African

Zionists all had links to Pentecost and drew their inspiration from it. Zionism only became “black” in Africa, whereas Pentecostalism was like that from the start. Paradoxically, the African Zionists received those black elements from white Pentecostals, who we will meet in the next chapter. Blunt assertions that Zionism is but a Christianized version of African possession cults are therefore historically and phenomenologically not true.⁶⁸

Fiery and colourful: a young preacher of the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion, Chileka, 2004



I will draw the lines still clearer in chapter 5 when talking about the state of mind the Zionists are in during their healing ritual and in chapter 6 when contrasting with other AICs in Malawi, which had less exposure to the Pentecostals.

Some understand the AICs (including Zionism) as the true African expression of Pentecostalism.⁶⁹ They group missionary initiated

⁶⁸ Karl Peltzer, *Some Contributions of Traditional Healing Practises towards Psychosocial Health Care in Malawi*, PhD, Universität Hannover, Sozialwissenschaftliche Fakultät, 1986, p. 55.

Pentecostal groups, such as the Assemblies of God, the Pentecostal Holiness Church or the Apostolic Church of Great Britain in Africa more under “missionary Pentecostal churches” – because they have fewer African elements.⁷⁰ However it is, comparing the differences between Zionists and Pentecostals sharpens both identities.

Dowie himself was an almost Pentecostal. The revival was not his time any longer; he would have certainly preferred to be a man in his own class. But he belonged to that group of radical evangelicals who trail-blazed the atmosphere and theological foundations for Pentecostalism. No wonder then that many of his local and international fruits fell into Pentecostal gardens.⁷¹ John G. Lake has already been mentioned as a carrier and transformer of Zionist and Pentecostal healing theology. What Lake did not change was Dowie’s baptismal practice, which is threefold, or triune, as they say. So up to this day, Lake’s Apostolic Faith Mission, almost all South African Zionists and all Malawian Zionists immerse their converts three times, each time for each person in the Trinity. Charles Fox Parham, another initiator of Pentecostalism in the USA, visited Dowie in Illinois and displayed some interest in taking over after Dowie’s demise. Another strong case for Dowie was Lilian Yeomans, who held a M.D. degree, yet she joined Dowie and thereafter became a healing evangelist within early Pentecostalism.⁷² There was Martha Wing Robinson, resident at Zion.⁷³ Her spiritual walk and teaching had a strong impact on the Waldvogels with their international pentecostalic ministry coming out of New York City.

There were, however, differences between Zion and Pentecost, right from the start. Details will later still emerge as we look into Malawian

⁶⁹ Allan Anderson, Samuel Otwang, *Tumelo. The Faith of African Pentecostals in South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA, 1993, p. 6.

⁷⁰ Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, Cambridge: University Press, 2004, p. 104. Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, pp. 246f.

⁷¹ Gordon P. Gardiner, *Out of Zion into all the World*, Shippensburg, PA: Companion Press, 1990.

⁷² Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003, p. 204.

⁷³ Gordon P. Gardiner, *Radiant Glory. The Life of Martha Wing Robinson*, n.d., Bread of Life, 1982.

Zionism, but two significant differences were already in place during their infancies. Compared to the Pentecostals, Zionism had a more limited scope of the spiritual field. On the other hand, Zion stepped out of the confines of oral culture, while most Pentecostals are stuck in it up to this day.

One glance at Dowie in his robes and Malawian Zionists with their almost carnival-like costumes suffices to conclude that Zion is a religion with strong visual aspects. Pentecostalism, on the other hand, did not restore the visual aspect of Africanism. They turned oral slave culture into a fine-tuned religious mechanism and condemned everything else as vanity or extravaganza. The Pentecostal movement quickly had its ranks filled with white people from holiness and Methodist churches. There was too much Protestant sobriety, although this might be hard to believe in some quarters. Pentecostals are still today much more sound than vision oriented. Their buildings are functional. Clerical dress code is business oriented, never priestly. One basic tenet of Pentecostalism was, and in many denominations still is, speaking in tongues as an initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. One cannot get more audible and oral than that. Visuality stands all but condemned. Two examples come to my mind. Still a few years ago, all male members of a certain South African Pentecostal movement were not allowed to wear colourful ties. They had to be of uniform silver or white fabric. Or a Pentecostal movement in Romania split over the question, whether its sisters should bind their scarves with the knot on the forehead (where it would be visible!) or at the back of the head. Both ways found ardent followers with ensuing theological debates, until the groups went separate ways. Compare this mangled concept of Christian liberty to the colourful array and expressionism of Africa's Zionists and the difference becomes overly clear.

David Bosch tries to ascribe visual religion to the Greeks and auditive expression to the Jews.⁷⁴ I do not see such a clear-cut line between their cultures, but agree with Bosch that both approaches have their

⁷⁴ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992, p. 195.

legitimization as a means to carry the Gospel. Once (back) in Africa, both Zion and Pentecost were perceived as natural expressions of the Christian faith. Pentecost found open doors in African cultures because of a similar auditive approach to reality. And Zionism, more than any other import of Christianity to Africa, reinstated the creativity that is inherent in this continent's costumes, symbols, ornaments and dances – the visual aspect. One example: It is significant that some researchers have made the mistake to ascribe the origin of Zion's robes to Zulu culture. The fact is that the origin lies with J. A. Dowie, but that the existing robes in the traditional Zulu setup and those, which the Zionists introduced, instantly mingled into one common dress code. To conclude this comparison, the Zionist certainly carry the day over the Pentecostals. Whereas Pentecostals still look rather blunt and boring on the outside, the Zionists boast both a visual and an oral culture, which is expressed in their distinctive preaching, music and dance. To Africans, Zion rang many bells.

Spirit-churches are by their very nature less influenced by towering pioneering personalities as, say, cults, who are built around one charismatic founder. Yet one can see portraits of J.A. Dowie in Malawi's Zionist churches. They have a strong sense of history and seek to draw legitimacy from it. One can hear claims of '*Zioni yenyeni*,' (the real Zion), an assertion made necessary in the confusion of 30 Zionist denominations in the country. Such a claim, going through different stages of fission, is staked by all denominations in Malawi. There is an ocean and a hundred years between them, but a few of those denominations are indeed close to the ideal, which Dowie first envisioned.

Pentecostalism, and Zionism as its early forerunner, teach the observer that Malawian Zionism is not some kind of Neolithic mysticism. The main ingredients of the African Zionists' faith are imports. They have been altered and inculturalized, but stem from historic Christianity nevertheless.

2. The Ngoni: *Mfecane* and Settlement

“All churches are culture churches – including our own.”⁷⁵

It is Saturday morning in Malawi. We are sitting under a shadowy tree in Mwansambo, a village near Chileka in southern Malawi. The atmosphere is one of tranquility and rural ease. I am chatting with Archbishop Kanjere, emeritus of the Entopia Zion church (14). The question put to him tries to investigate a stunning fact. In the beginning, Zion was seemingly the prerogative of one ethnic group, the Ngoni. A few figures suffice to make this clear: About 90% of all Zion denominations were started by Ngoni founders. If we look at the earliest and most influential Zionist groups, all three of them were pioneered by Ngoni founders, between 1922 and 1925. (Those groups which have no Ngoni founders display stronger non-Zionists tendencies and doctrines, which are not found in classical Zionism.) For the first fifty years, the occurrence of Zionist churches is congruent with the settlement of the Maseko Ngoni. Even in a place like this, Chileka, which is an ethnic Ngoni pocket among the Mang'anja, Zionism is well established. It is only in the last twenty or thirty years that Zion managed to incorporate other ethnic identities. Historically, Zion and the Ngoni go hand in hand.

Still nowadays, Zion is the prominent Christian religion in some chiefdoms of the Ntcheu district. We went out and counted: in Chikadya village, near Bwanje trading centre, on the way to Salima, live around one thousand adults.⁷⁶ There are eight Zionist denominations in Chikadya, each with one local church and their memberships as follows:

In Chikadya, close to 60% of the adult population is “in Zion.” We also went to Mazonda village, Chief Ganya, on the northern part of Ntcheu district, near Kandeu trading centre. Mazonda has a population of about 1500 adults, of which 900 are members of four different Zionist churches. Again, 60% of the population belongs to Zion.

⁷⁵ Andrew F.Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000, p. 8.

⁷⁶ Int. Bishop T.E.W. Kayenda, Chiumbe and Msangu, Salima, 28.7.2007.

*“That is a heavy question. Guinea fowl eggs, even if brooded over by a chicken, will still hatch as guinea fowl.”*⁷⁷ That was it? The worthy Archbishop did not say more. I asked about the Ngoni, he answered with guinea fowl eggs. His answer seems to imply that Ngoni identity has something to do with Zionism. He may try to say that it is proper and natural for a Ngoni to become a Zionist!

	Names of denominations found in Chikadya Village⁷⁸	Adult members
1	Zion Sabbath Church led by Manong’a (22)	25
2	Zion Sabbath Church led by Ndau (24)	40
3	Zion Sabbath Kenani Church led by Chirikumbuyo (20)	52
4	Zion Sabbath Church led by Kagwati Phiri (23)	27
5	Zion Sabbath Church led by Dimba (18)	35
6	Christian Apostolic Sabbath Church in Zion led by Magagula (13)	75
7	Sinai Zion Church led by Kaleke (21)	156
8	New Jerusalema Zion Church led by Sporo Saguga (19)	159
	Total	579

Table 1: Denominations in Chikadya village, Ntcheu

On the question why Zionism did not spread to the same extent among the northern Ngoni, Kanjere answered that the people in the north very much like to become Zionists, but that they are governed in a strong way and their leaders did not allow them to do so. In other words, the

⁷⁷ Int. Archbishop S. Kanjere, Mwansambo village, Chileka, 14.4.2005.

⁷⁸ The numbers behind the denominations’ names are for the sake of easier identification. They correspond to the genealogy at the end of the book.

Northern Ngoni have a different and stronger bond, which prevents them from becoming Zionists, up to this day. Such restriction was not laid or was not so strong among the southern Ngoni.

Kanjere's answer has a parallel. Jean Comaroff investigated the rise of Zionism among the Tshidi in South Africa. Put in academic language, she came to the same conclusion,

The form and significance of the Zionist groups could only be adequately understood when placed within the wider context of this relationship and the endogenous cultural elements [Tshidi] from which it was constructed.⁷⁹

Neither could Sundkler bypass the fact that Zionism was strongest among the Zulu, although the equation "Ngoni = Zulu = Zionism" has its ethnical and phenomenological pitfalls. Contrary to South Africa (or contrary to Sundkler's findings) Zionism in Malawi is not to be explained in the context of "Ethiopianism."⁸⁰ It is, however, imperative to this study to trace the historical, cultural and spiritual roots of the Ngoni.

All in all, about one dozen people groups call themselves *Ngoni* in southern Africa.⁸¹ They are a Bantu people, who originally lived in the territory of modern Swaziland and Zululand in South Africa. A 'Who is who?' in Ngoni ethnography led me to different and contradictory answers, which are nevertheless a true reflection of the confusion which has beset these people groups ever since they emerged from clan numbers into more tribal dimensions. Some sources refer to them as Zulu, but the Ngoni themselves, those from families who had made the trek all the way from the south, saw their origins in Swaziland, north of the Zulu.⁸² Berglund, too, differentiates between the Zulu and Nguni societies, to which he counts the Swazi, Mpondo, Thembu, Bhaca and

⁷⁹ Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985, p. 187.

⁸⁰ Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets of South Africa*, London: Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 13.

⁸¹ John A. Barnes, *The Fort Jameson Ngoni*, n. d., p. 194.

⁸² Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 5.

Xhosa groups.⁸³ It will be hard to arrive at a clear-cut distinction between Zulu and Swazi populations in the beginning of the 19th century. The Swazi already formed a distinctive ethnic entity during that time. They bordered with Zululand, and were every now and then defeated by the Zulu, but never crushed.⁸⁴ More important to our study, the cultural and traditional religious features of Swazi and Zulu overlap.⁸⁵ Like them the Ngoni were patrilineal in descent. Marriage was arranged by a gift of cattle, called *lobola*. The children would always belong to the father in case of the mother's death or divorce.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were several reasons for the clans living in Natal to leave and look for greener pastures. Shaka's wars brought turmoil to the country and the final defeat of the Zulu by British troops meant that life would never be the same. Borders were drawn and redrawn to accommodate the pluralism of interests, of which white interests came to dominate more and more. Immigrating Boer and British settlers had the best pieces of land cut out for them. Africans had for thousands of years trekked south, but in the beginning of the 19th century in Natal, many put their hopes in reversing that order and found new life in the north. Shaka's Zulu had defeated a group known as the Ndwandwe, relatives of them, under their leader Zwide. The outcome of that battle, around 1819, was the first trek northward.⁸⁶ The Zulu refer to this migration (and others during those years) as *mfecane*.⁸⁷ It was initially one massive exodus, but two leaders, Zwangendaba and Ngwana

⁸³ Axel-Ivar Berglund, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989, p. 386.

⁸⁴ Donald R. Morris, *The Washing of the Spears. The Rise and Fall of the Zulu Nation*, London: Pimlico, 1994, p. 136.

⁸⁵ Axel-Ivar Berglund, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989, pp. 240, 327, 343.

⁸⁶ Thomas T. Spear, *Zwangendaba's Ngoni 1821 – 1890: A Political and Social History of a Migration*, African Studies Program, Occasional Paper No. 4, Madison: The University of Wisconsin, 1972, p. 1.

⁸⁷ Yesaya M. Chibambo, *My Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London, n.d. 1942, pp. 15-24; in: Thomas T. Spear, *Zwangendaba's Ngoni 1821 – 1890: A Political and Social History of a Migration*, African Studies Program, Occasional Paper No. 4, Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1972, p. 14.

fell out with each other and so they split into two cohorts, later known as the Jere and the Maseko Ngoni. They marched different routes and they settled in different areas. For the Jere, a precise date can be given for they crossed the Zambezi on the 19th of November 1835, the day of a solar eclipse.⁸⁸ They reached Lake Malawi in 1842 and later settled in the north of Malawi around Mzimba. The Maseko crossed the Zambezi later, in 1836.⁸⁹ By that time, their leader was called Mputa. Not unlike the children of Israel during their exodus, not only Ngoni people migrated north, they snowballed other groups into their society. The first group to join them were clans from south of the Zambezi, who had lived around the Sabi River. Another addition were people groups from north of the Zambezi. The last of the groups, from our viewpoint, were ‘those of the country,’ who had lived in Malawi but were absorbed by the Ngoni.⁹⁰ The majority of the Ngoni finally settled in Malawi around 1870. This diversity spoils the picture of one homogenous Ngoni ‘tribe.’

The main group under scrutiny here are the Ngoni from Ntcheu, a central district in Malawi. They are known under different names, as Maseko Ngoni or Gomani’s Ngoni. Their territory was known as the central Ngoni kingdom, sometimes referred to as southern Angoniland, which is more in use among Catholics and in conjunction with the ethnic Ngoni living across the border in Mozambique. The northerners are usually known as M’belwa’s Ngoni, sometimes they are called the Ngoni from Mzimba. The central Ngoni went west of the Shire River and traversed the country (and parts of modern Zambia and Mozambique) for more than 20 years under Mputa. His younger brother Chidyawonga finally settled the Maseko around 1868 on the eastern slopes of the Kirk Range with their centre west of the Range, at Domwe. The autochthonous

⁸⁸ Michelle P. Sardella, *Lomwe Anthropology: Religious Tradition and Culture of the Alomwe of Phalombe District in Malawi*, Licentiate, Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 2003, p. 24.

⁸⁹ Olivia M. Liwewe, “The Maseko Ngoni from 1820 to 1896: A Re-Examination of the Evidence from the Rangeley Papers in the Light of some Secondary Sources”, Zomba: Chancellor College, Department of History, 1979, p. 6.

⁹⁰ Walter A. Elmslie, *Among the Wild Ngoni*, London: Frank Cass, 1970, p. ix.

people they found were called Ntumba.⁹¹ (During our research, we found a clan living around Mphepozinyi, Ntcheu. The local people call them 'Mtumba.' They are believed to be the product of Ngoni raiders marrying those people who had lived in the area before the Ngoni conquest had taken place⁹²). The invaders quickly subdued the local population. About thirty years later, the last group arrived in Malawi and stayed for good. They came from the Angonia province in Portuguese East Africa. Things came to a head between them and the Portuguese overlords, especially when that country's border was set up.⁹³ So, those Ngoni moved. They settled northwest of Blantyre, Chief Kuntaja, in the beginning of the 20th century.⁹⁴ Zionism is naturally strong among them. One can see hundreds of Zionists when traveling past Chileka airport on any Sunday afternoon. Ecclesiastically, however, they belong to the Zionists in Ntcheu. Most denominations in Chileka have their headquarters in Ntcheu.

The Ngoni were at the height of their power in this country right after they had settled here. Their military formation and tactics, their tight social organization and efficient government hierarchy had no equal in the country. From there, we can witness a cultural and political demise. It is important to understand this demise as it forms one of the major conditions for the rise of Zionism among the Ngoni.

The 'real' Ngoni have always been a minority in Malawi. For example, only 32 out of the 258 clans of Mbelwa's kingdom were of Nguni origin.⁹⁵ The royal clan of Maseko was known in Swaziland, too, and formed the aristocracy in the new country. However, apart from the royal kraal and their relatives in major towns and chieftainships, the population was Chewa, Tonga, Ntumba and, increasing during the end of the 19th century, Yao.⁹⁶ The Ngoni had successfully merged defeated clans and larger ethnic

⁹¹ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 8.

⁹² Int. Bishop P.E. Makoko, Kaluzi, 28.2.2006.

⁹³ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 98.

⁹⁴ Int. Archbishop S. Kanjere, Mwansambo village, Chileka, 14.4.2005.

⁹⁵ Thomas T. Spear, *Zwangendaba's Ngoni 1821 – 1890: A Political and Social History of a Migration*, African Studies Program, Occasional Paper No. 4, Madison: The University of Wisconsin, 1972, p. 11.

⁹⁶ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 49.

groups into their nation during the *mfecane*, mainly by recruiting their former enemies into Ngoni regiments. Once settled, different conditions prevailed. All Ngoni now settled in Malawi were born during the trek and nobody had any experience of how to rule a country. Some foreign elements, such as the British presence and the Yao with their Swahili trade partners, could be intimidated, perhaps even pushed to the periphery of Ngoni territory, but they would not go away. The military Ngoni came to see that they had to arrange themselves with those foreigners, annihilation or absorption was no longer an option. Wars turned into raids, professional warriors became soldiers on standby. Politically, the northern Ngoni managed to man all subordinate chiefdoms with their own royal kin. In the central kingdom, only the Paramount was of Ngoni stock, all other chiefs came from different clans.⁹⁷

The abolition of warfare re-strengthened those who had been former captives of the Ngoni. Earlier, they had had to adapt to Ngoni fashions, such as marrying with *lobola*, have their ears pierced, join the army and serve their masters in the gardens. Now, they regrouped in their own villages and were free to build them according to their own patterns.⁹⁸ The Chewa reinstated the girls' initiation, *chinamwali*,⁹⁹ and once again drew their descent from the mother.¹⁰⁰ The transfer of cattle for giving into marriage, *lobola*, was by and by discontinued.¹⁰¹ The majority of Ngoni men married Chewa women. Those would not give up their cultural heritage and passed their ideas on to the next generation. The Chewa

⁹⁷ R.F. Kankondo, "The Ngoni Migrations, Settlement and Political Organization", Zomba: Chancellor College, Department of History, 1969/70, p. 7.

⁹⁸ Thomas T. Spear, *Zwangendaba's Ngoni 1821 – 1890: A Political and Social History of a Migration*, African Studies Program, Occasional Paper No. 4, Madison: The University of Wisconsin, 1972, p. 26.

⁹⁹ Margaret Read, *Children of their Fathers*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968, p. 65.

¹⁰⁰ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 25.

¹⁰¹ Thomas T. Spear, *Zwangendaba's Ngoni 1821 – 1890: A Political and Social History of a Migration*, African Studies Program, Occasional Paper No. 4, Madison: The University of Wisconsin, 1972, p. 25.

were repeatedly stating that, “*We defeated them with our women.*”¹⁰² Therefore, the first characteristic to be lost was language. Around Ntcheu, Zulu was spoken for a shorter time and by less people compared to the northern Ngoni.¹⁰³ By 1896, the Ntcheu Ngoni were all speaking Chinyanja.¹⁰⁴ By 1900 the people around Mzimba had switched to Chitumbuka¹⁰⁵ and only a few villages have kept Zulu, up to this day.¹⁰⁶ Eventually, the central Ngoni had adopted most of the cultural and religious practices of their former subjects. In 1936, few men in central Ngoniland remembered the traditional songs and the big shields were cut in a pitiful way, at least in the eyes of a leading Ngoni historian.¹⁰⁷ In the northern kingdom, traditional building patterns were still seen in the 1930s, but in the central kingdom they had become extinct. It was clear that the proportion of people of Swazi clans within the Ngoni nation in the north was much higher than in the Ntcheu area.¹⁰⁸ In Ntcheu, the villages consisted of local people with a Ngoni aristocracy imposed on them.

To this must be added that Ngoni and Maravi cultures, e.g. the Chewa, are not entirely alien to each other. Both are Bantu people and therefore likenesses in languages and customs can be found. Both had a common creation myth, wherein the chameleon played a sad part,¹⁰⁹ assumptions about conception and pregnancy were common,¹¹⁰ even funeral rites had

¹⁰² Bridglal Pachai, “Ngoni Politics and Diplomacy in Malawi, 1848-1904,” in: Pachai, ed., *The Early History of Malawi*, London: Longman, 1975, p. 247.

¹⁰³ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, pp. v, 22.

¹⁰⁴ Bridglal Pachai, “Ngoni Politics and Diplomacy in Malawi, 1848-1904,” in: Pachai, ed., *The Early History of Malawi*, London: Longman, 1975, p. 187.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas T. Spear, *Zwangendaba’s Ngoni 1821 – 1890: A Political and Social History of a Migration*, African Studies Program, Occasional Paper No. 4, Madison: The University of Wisconsin, 1972, p. 31.

¹⁰⁶ Masiye Tembo, *Touched by His Grace. A Ngoni Story of Tragedy and Triumph*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005.

¹⁰⁷ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 43.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

¹⁰⁹ Axel-Ivar Berglund, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989, p. 251.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 362.

their parallels, e.g. making a special exit for the corpse was done in Natal among the Zulu as it is done in Dedza among the Chewa.¹¹¹ Apart from this, it truly was a conquest by the conquered, at least in the cultural and religious sense. The writings of missionaries and anthropologists of those days, Fraser, Elmslie, Young and, later, Read, are nothing but snapshots of a fleeting 'Ngoni culture' which also belittle the fact that those conquered by the Ngoni had only superficially adopted their customs.¹¹² Still in the 1930s, Ngoni chief Gomani II tried to stem the tide of increasing Chewa superiority. He forbade their dances such as *vinyau* and *malombo*. He was against *chinamwali*, the female puberty initiation.¹¹³ Some of his elderly councilors gave in to the illusion that the Ngoni had not only conquered the land but imposed their culture as well. Claims that the local people had, for example, adopted the *lobola* custom, were greeted with sneers by the listeners.¹¹⁴ The fact was that the strength of former Ngoni aristocracy in the central kingdom had been displaced by the local majority, their cultural practices proved to be more durable. The central Ngoni themselves, in the 1930s, had turned uxori-local, meaning that the wife stays and the husband moves into her village.¹¹⁵ In 1938 and 1939, about 90% of the inhabitants in the northern villages Eswazini, Endindeni and Eluhangeni were married by *lobola*. In the central kingdom during the same time, less than 10% of the people from Chikwita, Mangozo and Mchakhatha villages were married according to that rite.¹¹⁶

The political fall from the height of Ngoni power was not much slower. It became clear in the 1880s that the Yao were too formidable to be overcome. The position of one ethnic group subduing all others in the region could not be upheld. During the same decade, missionary David C. Scott invited Maseko Ngoni workers to come south to Blantyre to build

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 364.

¹¹² Thomas T. Spear, *Zwangendaba's Ngoni 1821 – 1890: A Political and Social History of a Migration*, African Studies Program, Occasional Paper No. 4, Madison: The University of Wisconsin, 1972, p. 29.

¹¹³ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 110.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

the impressive cathedral of *St. Michael and All the Angels*.¹¹⁷ This was just the initial trickle of Ngoni labourers working for white settlers and missionaries. As it became a stream, it forever changed the economy of the tribe and their ability to quickly assemble their armies. It has to be remembered that most 'Ngoni' had only been recently grafted into the tribal conglomerate. They quickly changed their alliances to the new rising powers, such as the British with their impressive firepower and the Yao with their trading connections.¹¹⁸

Inkhosi Chidyawonga died in 1876 and succession disputes split the Maseko into two from 1876 to 1891. Chifisi reigned in the northern part of the central kingdom, while Chikuse took the southern end. The events of 1891 further altered the course of the Maseko Ngoni. Both rulers, Chifisi and Chikusi, died during that year. They were the last chiefs from the *mfecane* era. Their successors, young paramount Gomani and his royal opponent, Kachindamoto, did not have the diplomatic skills needed for the delicate balance of power in the country. They rather wielded their spears, trying to prove themselves on the battlefield against the Yao and other groups. Military raids among the Ngoni ensued for the next years. Malawi had by that time become a British protectorate. Their soldiers, many of them Sikhs, were stationed all over the land. The British had, after initial hiccups, the tax administration up and running.

The Paramount never submitted to white rule. European settlers had taken many of Gomani's men away from him, for the British administration demanded hut tax from his people. No wonder he punished those who paid the tax, but this the British saw as an open declaration of war. One difference between the northern and the central Ngoni kingdoms was that there was no strong missionary presence that could play the role of a mediator between the Maseko Ngoni and the

¹¹⁷ Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996.

¹¹⁸ Ian Linden, "The Maseko Ngoni at Domwe: 1870-1900," in: Bridglal Pachai, ed., *The Early History of Malawi*, London: Longman, 1975, p. 243.

British administration, as was indeed the case in the north.¹¹⁹ Another difference was that in the central kingdom, contrary to the north, the paramount did not share power with his relatives.¹²⁰ Gomani was the only target the British wanted to hit. He did not have much of an army left, there was no countrywide rising against the colonialists. Gomani was captured in 1896. Without a trial, his captors tied him to a tree and shot the paramount of the Maseko Ngoni on 26th of October 1896.¹²¹

a. Ngoni Religion

This execution brings us the subject of Ngoni religion. Back in Natal, Nguni *Weltanschauung* was similar to most other Bantu societies. They believed in one God, albeit remote and unapproachable. A. Shorter classified the primal Ngoni religion as *relative deism*. The Supreme Being does not play a prominent role within their religious system,¹²² where most prayers are directed to ancestors, cult heroes and guardian divinities.¹²³ God is *deus otiosus*, happy by Himself and not in need to bother with trivial, down-to-earth affairs. They revered their ancestors, perhaps not as much as was the case in other Bantu groups. Kuper, probably led by an over-idealistic Christian perspective, believed that the Swazi people never worshiped their ancestors.¹²⁴ But for Malawi, prayers were clearly addressed to them.¹²⁵ If the ancestral cult was somehow diminished, then it was compensated by the nationwide institution that venerated their dead

¹¹⁹ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2000, pp. 89ff. Olivia M. Liwewe, "The Maseko Ngoni from 1820 to 1896: A Re-Examination of the Evidence from the Rangeley Papers in the Light of some Secondary Sources", Zomba: Chancellor College, Department of History, 1979, p. 14.

¹²⁰ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 50.

¹²¹ Olivia M. Liwewe, "The Maseko Ngoni from 1820 to 1896: A Re-Examination of the Evidence from the Rangeley Papers in the Light of some Secondary Sources", Zomba: Chancellor College, Department of History, 1979, p. 16.

¹²² Walter A. Elmslie, *Among the Wild Ngoni*, London: Frank Cass, 1970, p. 68.

¹²³ Aylward Shorter, *Prayer in the Religious Traditions of Africa*, Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1975, pp. 8-13; in: Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000, pp. 122f.

¹²⁴ Hilda Kuper, *An African Aristocracy*, London: Oxford University Press, 1947, p. 192.

¹²⁵ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 118.

Paramounts. A senior woman was chosen as priestess. She was the guardian over the hut, where the chief's spirit was believed to reside. By praying to the dead paramount, the Ngoni could approach UMKulumqango, the highest spirit, God. We do not know if this worship was altered during the *mfecane* or the first years in Malawi. It seems to have replaced ancestor veneration, which must have become difficult during the migration for it was impossible to revisit the graves. In comparison to the Chewa and Lomwe, the Ngoni have had hardly any spiritual bond to the land.¹²⁶ They destroyed the ancestral shrines of people conquered by them, all related rites were forbidden.¹²⁷ Gomani's violent death in 1896 was at the same time the killing of the Ngoni strongest religious symbol. This terrible blow meant defeat, both politically and spiritually. The gods of Africa died in America, the god of the Ngoni was killed in Malawi. Was this the end of the Ngoni religious life? Was secularization in the wake of colonization their inescapable fate? The story told in these pages shows that they refused to be disenchanted, that they had a spiritual longing stronger than they reality that surrounded them.

There is no doubt that Zionists have retained and assimilated traditional religious and cultural elements into their system. In this context, two terms are used when talking about religious life untouched by Christianity: primal and traditional. Traditional can be all those tenets and rituals, which are not Christian, no matter where they occur on the timeline. Following Walls' definition, primal is that which was there *before* the arrival of Christianity (or any other import). Contrasting primal religions with Christianity and other world religions, he writes, "*All other faiths are subsequent and represent, as it were, second thoughts; all other believers, and for that matter non-believers, are primalists*

¹²⁶ Brian Morris, *Animals and Ancestors. An Ethnography*, Oxford: Berg, 2000, p. 204.

¹²⁷ Thomas T. Spear, *Zwangendaba's Ngoni 1821 – 1890: A Political and Social History of a Migration*, African Studies Program, Occasional Paper No. 4, Madison: The University of Wisconsin, 1972, p. 31.

underneath.”¹²⁸ With the Ngoni, both terms apply, because they were almost untouched by Christianity during the *mfecane*. Their religion was primal because it was there before missionaries came to them and it is traditional, for it had not yet assimilated Christian components. The *mfecane* and the subsequent fusion of the Ngoni with local cults makes any undiluted definition of ‘primal religion’ impossible. Zulu customs trekked north, too, but many of them have not survived. Those that did, are further hidden under layers of Christian notions and procedures. Chewa customs have been incorporated into Zionism, but again, it would be a grave mistake to declare those traditions as the primal religion which underlies these churches. Add still the variety within Zionism itself, and the researcher is cautioned to tread with uttermost care on primal grounds. I have, however, tried to gather all sides of the story. Whatever the subject, e.g. gender, dancing, prophesying, cattle-ownership or church hierarchy, there will be a link, or at least a hint, at traditional Ngoni customs. Some of those links could be well established, others are more phenomenological or even hypothetical.

Comparatively little has been written about the Maseko Ngoni and their initial exposure to Christianity, especially if compared with the material about the northern Ngoni. Scottish missionary doctor Elmslie tried to make his mission-enthused readers believe that his Presbyterian faith had almost become a *volkskirche* among the northern Ngoni.¹²⁹ A major contributing factor were black missionaries from South Africa, especially William Koyi.¹³⁰ Laws, Elmslie, Young and Fraser’s efforts were not only crowned with success, they also knew how to book-market them. No such show of faith could be reported from the central region of Malawi. The Dutch Reformed Church had been working there, equivalent to Livingstonia in the north. The Murrys and other missionaries did not reach the Maseko Ngoni to the extent that their colleagues had won

¹²⁸ Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000, pp. 120f.

¹²⁹ Walter A. Elmslie, *Among the Wild Ngoni*, London: Frank Cass, 1970, ch. 13.

¹³⁰ Jack T. Thompson, *Touching the Heart. Xhosa Missionaries to Malawi, 1876-1888*, Pretoria: UNISA, 2000.

many northerners.¹³¹ The initial phase of the DRC paralleled Livingstonia's.¹³² The South African missionaries arrived 1889 in a country whose masters were the Ngoni. They obtained Chiwere's permission to start a mission station near his headquarters, and called it *Mvera*, obedience.¹³³ The relationship was strained and sometimes Ngoni warriors threatened the work with total extinction. However, after a few years mission stations budded in several locations. The work method was to establish primary schools and to introduce the Christian faith by means of such education.¹³⁴ The Paramount's interests were rather political; he tried to use the missionaries to further his powers over and against other tribes. Moreover, Chiwere saw in them spiritual banner bearers. His repeated demands for rainmaking exasperated the missionaries. The mission's developments during the first years point to a gradual shift from work among the Ngoni towards the Chewa population. This happened in accordance with the political demise of the Ngoni kingdom in the central region. The first Africans to be converted to the DRC faith were mainly of Chewa stock, and this only happened after the first missionaries were martyred by Malaria. In 1896, the mission station at Livolezi was vacated by invitation of the Chewa chief Mazengera. The band of missionaries shifted to the eastern slopes of Nkhoma Mountain; this to protect Mazengera against Ngoni raids.¹³⁵ All participants in this tribal and colonial mixture had to endure political tensions. To the Ngoni, the position of the DRC missionaries was, at best, ambivalent. The South Africans were certainly allies against the hut tax and subsequent labour migration, imposed by the British administration in 1892. The Boer War

¹³¹ J. Lou Pretorius (Snr.), "An Introduction to the History of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission in Malawi 1889 – 1914", in: Bridglal Pachai, ed., *The Early History of Malawi*, London: Longman, 1975, pp. 365 – 383.

¹³² Johannes Du Plessis, *A Thousand Miles into Africa*, Cape Town: Oliphant, 1905.

¹³³ M.W. Retief, *William Murray of Nyasaland*, Alice: Lovedale Press, 1958, pp. 57f.

¹³⁴ Christoff M. Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi. The History of the Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian 1889-1962*, PhD, University of Stellenbosch, 1980, pp. 178ff.

¹³⁵ J. Lou Pretorius (Snr), "An Introduction to the History of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission in Malawi 1889 – 1914", in: Bridglal Pachai, ed., *The Early History of Malawi*, London: Longman, 1975, p. 368.

alienated white South Africans and British overlords even further. However, the DRC's W. H. Murray had persuaded Chiwere to accept British "protection," a step which did not go down well with the leading Ngoni. The DRC did nothing to preserve Ngoni identity and their rigid ways to convert, e. g. that nobody was to become a church member unless he or she could read, did not help to embed the Ngoni in this particular Christian church. The DRC was the dominant Christian denomination in the central region during the last part of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries. It did not reach the Ngoni en masse. Contrary to the north, where Livingstonia did reach out to the Ngoni, the DRC did not penetrate into their culture and win their hearts.

Nowadays, the Roman Catholic Church has a nice center at Mua Mission, called the KuNgoni Art Craft Centre. It is a place where the Chewa, Ngoni and Yao cultural heritage finds expression in painting, carving and several other artistic outlets.¹³⁶ With the Ngoni, their history is emphasized over their cultural heritage; culture is much stronger demonstrated with the Chewa. The early RC missionaries had a hard time with the central Ngoni. They came in 1901 (Montfortians at Nzama) and in 1902 (White Fathers at Mua) and for the first decades their efforts seemed to fall on hard soil among the local population. Like the DRC, the main method was to start schools and plant the church by educating the younger generation. For example, the Montfort missionaries settled at Nzama, near chief Njobvuyalema. The three fathers started well, caring for the sick and trying to learn the local language, Chinyanja. However, there was constant friction between the Montfortians and the chiefs, culminating in Njobvuyalema's imprisonment after the missionaries had pressed charges against him with the colonial government.¹³⁷ Such an act, and similar incidents, in which the white missionaries sided with the British administration against the Ngoni,¹³⁸ did certainly not endear the Ngoni to the Catholic Church. The next Montfort mission station in the

¹³⁶ Martin Ott, *African Theology in Images*, Zomba: Kachere, 2000.

¹³⁷ Hubert Reijnaerts, Ann Nielsen, Matthew Schoffeleers, *Montfortians in Malawi*, Zomba: CLAIM-Kachere, 1997, p. 47.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

area was only opened in 1928 at Nsipe, by that time the work had reached much greater proportions among the Chewa, Mang'anja and Lomwe. There can be no doubt that the educational method of proselytizing has been successful for the RCC, at least by numbers.¹³⁹ However, the church did not connect with the central Ngoni as Livingstonia had done with the northern Ngoni, neither did it in any way halt the demise of Ngoni culture during the colonial era.

The time, place and people, which are of particular interest in this chapter, are the Ngoni around Ntcheu in the 1920s and 30s, those years when Zionism came and found wide open doors among them. Their parents were the uprooted *mfecane* generation, in exile and seekers of a new home.¹⁴⁰ They did settle, but what happened to them was an almost total loss of cultural identity and an absolute fall from political power. For example, Anderseni and Aides Kanjere, who had been in the *mfecane* in the 1860s, started to dance *gule wamkulu*, a traditional Chewa dance, after they had settled in this country.¹⁴¹ *Gule wamkulu* is much more than a dance, it is a strong marker of Chewa identity.¹⁴² The sight of the once powerful Ngoni dancing *gule* spells cultural defeat. (There is contemporary evidence, too, that the Maseko Ngoni went that far into assimilating Chewa elements. Both, Wilfred Katunga and Madalitso Harry, who are Ngoni from Ntcheu, testify that the Ngoni of that area do dance *gule wamkulu*, sometimes for money, on other occasions to appease the spirits in times of draught.)

However, most founding fathers of Zionism in Malawi did have a Christian background prior to becoming Zionists. The majority came from the Zambezi Industrial Mission (ZIM), some were members of the Churches of Christ, fewer were Anglicans (see next chapter), less still

¹³⁹ Martin Ott, *African Theology in Images*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2000, p. 218.

¹⁴⁰ Olivia M. Liwewe, "The Maseko Ngoni from 1820 to 1896: A Re-Examination of the Evidence from the Rangeley Papers in the Light of some Secondary Sources", Zomba: Chancellor College, Department of History, 1979, p. 16.

¹⁴¹ Int. Archbishop S. Kanjere, Entopia Zion Church, Mwansambo village, Chileka, Blantyre, 18.4.2005.

¹⁴² Johan W.M. van Breugel, *Chewa Traditional Religion*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2001, pp. 126, 130.

Roman Catholic. The ZIM had been established by Joseph Booth.¹⁴³ According to its name, the mission was based on the self-supporting principle, an idea which had its origins with William Taylor.¹⁴⁴ The mission's first headquarters at Mitsidi (near Blantyre) were laid out as a huge plantation site. It was constructed by skilled Ngoni workers or those that the Ngoni had sent, an employment draft which Booth copied from Blantyre Mission. This must have been the earliest contact between Booth and the Ngoni, in December 1892, for he had not yet travelled into Ngoniland. He hatched a grand plan to open up mission stations among the Ngoni and started to raise funds for it in 1893. That same year, he went and palavered for one week with one of Gomani's officials. Booth made a favourable impression and was welcomed to open up a work in the central kingdom. The 'stations' were financially supported, even at the expense of the headquarters' development. Joseph Booth made an early exit from the Zambezi Industrial Mission. By the end of 1894, he was already on his way to England to seek alliance with a different mission. In Ngoniland, however, the ZIM had a flourishing work.¹⁴⁵ It is an evangelical church, their tenets are close to those of the Baptists.¹⁴⁶ It could not yet offer an all embracing symbolism as Zion later did, yet it had some features, which attracted the people. Its practice of baptisms by total immersion certainly rang a bell with the Ngoni. The ZIM did for a good number of years provide for itself and for those employed on its plantations, although tensions were there.¹⁴⁷ To many Ngoni living in Ntcheu district in the beginning of the 20th century, the ZIM became a *preparatio evangelica* into Zionism.

¹⁴³ Harry Langworthy, "Africa for the African." *The Life of Joseph Booth*, Zomba: Kachere, 1996, pp. 31ff.

¹⁴⁴ Klaus Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions*, Oxford: Regnum, 1994, pp. 53f.

¹⁴⁵ H.K. Chatepa, "The Containment Policy of the Zambezi Industrial Mission: The Denominational Balkanization of the Ntonda Lowlands", Zomba: Chancellor College, Department of TRS, 1980.

¹⁴⁶ Joseph C. Chakanza, *An Annotated List of African Instituted Church 1900 – 1981*, Zomba: Sources for the Study of Religion in Malawi, no. 10, 1983, church no. 143.

¹⁴⁷ M.E. Leslie, "Ntcheu in the 1890s", *The Society of Malawi Journal*, Blantyre, Vol. XXIV, no. 1, 1971, p. 66.

The same can be said about the Ngoni Zionists who had had their prelude in the Churches of Christ, although they were fewer in numbers if compared to the ZIM. The Churches of Christ have had an outstation at Dzunje from 1911 on.¹⁴⁸ Other Ngoni had joined this denomination in the south, at their headquarters Namiwawa Mission, Jali. Missionaries have been in the country since 1907. However, the Churches of Christ's work at Ntcheu only spread on a larger scale in the 1930s, when they took over from the Scottish Baptists there, too late to become a bigger cradle for the first Zionists in the country.¹⁴⁹ Its evangelical doctrine is similar to the ZIM's, in fact, their founding missionaries, Booth and Hollis, were birds of the same feather.¹⁵⁰

This early mission set up, displayed on the map, answers two important questions in regard to Zion and the Ngoni. First, some of the rural centers of future Zionism in the country, e.g. at Mphepozina and Bwanje, where nowadays we have the highest concentration of Zionists, were simply not reached by other missions until Zion came in the 1920s and 1930s. There was a veneer of evangelical Christianity, which, in their words, did not reach deep enough to touch the soul of the Ngoni and become an encompassing life-style. Second, it is an established fact for Zion to be a predominant Ngoni faith, Maseko Ngoni to be precise. The other Ngoni in the country were Chiwere's Ngoni at Dowa, Mpezeni's Ngoni at Namitete and Mchinji and, M'mbelwa's Ngoni at Mzimba.¹⁵¹ All these Ngoni centres later had their fair share of Zionists, higher than in other ethnic identities, but lower if compared to the Maseko Ngoni. The map below shows that other churches concentrated elsewhere and thus created an open space for Zion to take hold among the Maseko Ngoni. The UMCA focused its work around the Lake and among the Yao. The

¹⁴⁸ Harry Langworthy, *"Africa for the African." The Life of Joseph Booth*, Zomba: Kachere, 1996, pp. 391f.

¹⁴⁹ Communication Mr. Mark Thiessen, who is working on a thesis about the Churches of Christ in Malawi. 22.4.2008.

¹⁵⁰ George Shepperson, Thomas Price, *Independent African*, Edinburgh: University Press, 1987, pp. 341ff.

¹⁵¹ Mary Tew, *Peoples of the Lake Nyasa Region*, London: Oxford University Press, 1950, p. vii.

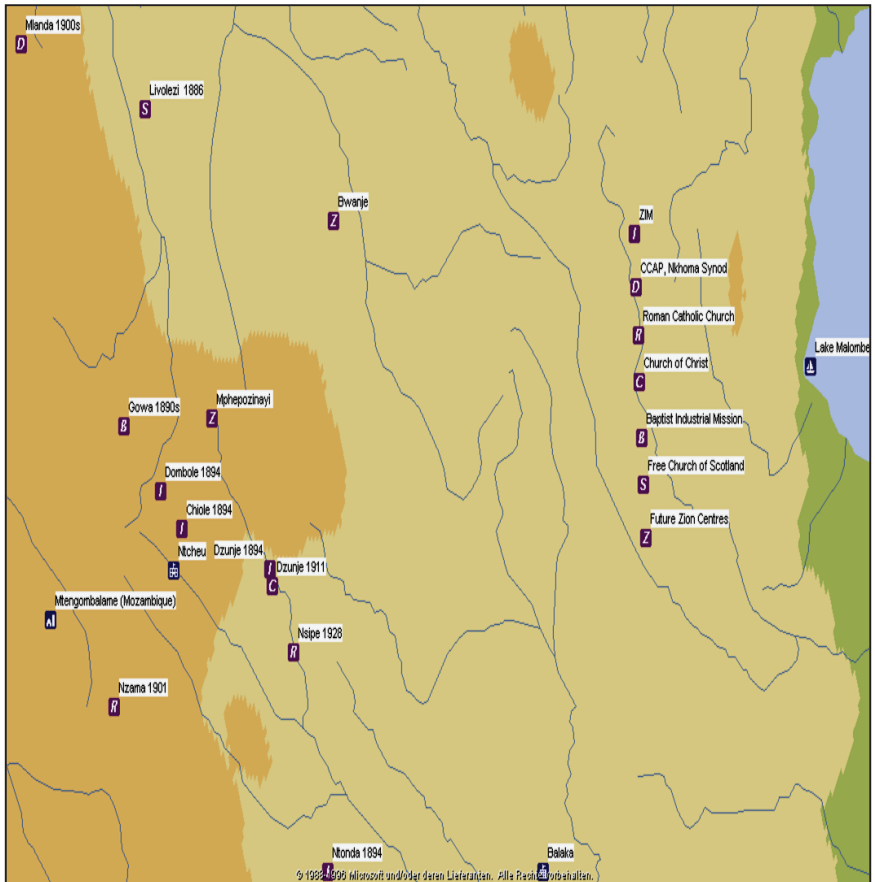
CCAP, Livingstonia Synod, had a strong presence among the Northern Ngoni and Tumbuka, while their southern brothers, the Blantyre Mission, focused on the Shire Highlands. Their outpost at Livolezi was started already in 1886, but the missionaries found the conditions too hard to work under and it was 'given' to Nkhoma Synod in 1895. Nkhoma, in turn, suffered the death of Mrs. Vlok there and the main center moved to Mlanda, northwest of Livolezi, in 1896.¹⁵² The Catholic Church was present with their first 'station' at Nzama, in 1901, but it took them 27 more years to expand the work eastward to Nsipe. Too late for our story was the Lake View Mission, which the Seventh-day Adventists established in 1934.¹⁵³ The opposite, however, is true when we look at the other Ngoni peoples' groups. Livingstonia established their Presbyterian faith very early among the Mzimba Ngoni. The Nkhoma Synod did the same around Dowa. The Ngoni on the Malawian side of Mchinji – Chipata were until 1910 evangelized by the DRC, the RCC and the UMCA.¹⁵⁴

That the Ngoni became Zionists because of some common character traits certainly has a ring of truth to it. But fact is that mission movements do play an important role. The questions of who came first and who did not arrive at all have been answered. These historical lines have not vanished; they still sketch our contemporary picture of Zionism in Malawi.

¹⁵² Christoff M. Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi. The History of the Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian 1889-1962*, PhD, University of Stellenbosch, 1980, p. 73.

¹⁵³ Macleard S. Banda, *Mission by All to All: A Study of the History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Lunjika Mission 1932 – 1995*, MA, Zomba: Chancellor College, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, 2006, p. 19.

¹⁵⁴ John A. Barnes, *The Fort Jameson Ngoni*. N. d., but the article must have been written after 1944, pp. 233f.



Map 1: First Churches among the Maseko Ngoni

b. The Political Landscape

In the political arena, the British grip on power was absolute. In 1933, they recognized Gomani II as Paramount with six Subordinate Native Authorities: Chakhumbira, Kamfoloma, Kadewere, Kwataine, Masasa and Njolomole. Only half of them were Ngoni chiefs and the Ntcheu District

Council, established in 1954 and symbolically under Gomani's chairmanship, had only a quarter of seats filled with Ngoni chiefs. Gomani's territory, however, was de facto run by the Ntcheu District commissioner. On lower levels of authority, the British did not accept traditional leaders in their own right. They did not grant them legislative powers, but preferred them to act more like a 'native police corps'.¹⁵⁵

Fortunately, census figures for the Ntcheu district during the time of Zionist beginnings are recorded.¹⁵⁶ In 1926, there lived 64,944 people in the district. Overwhelmingly, 64,023 of them called themselves Ngoni. This is not a sociological or ethnological study, it is not so important to us if they all were of pure Nguni stock. What matters more when it comes to the question of identity is the self-perception of the people, who they wanted to be. Among sociologists, the instrumentalists, who believe that ethnicity is socially constructed, will have a heyday.¹⁵⁷ The Kirk Range had not been a desert void of people before the coming of the Ngoni. However, in 1926, 99% of all people in the district said they were Ngoni. Five years later, 1931, the picture had changed significantly. There was a total of 78,355 people in the district, out of them, 46,308 said that they were Ngoni. The second largest group is the Nyanja people, 25,393 now called themselves Nyanja, while five years earlier only 334 had said to belong to that ethnic group. The scales had tipped to the extreme in 1945. Only 15,242 chose to belong to the Ngoni, while 60,400 said they were Nyanja. Now, the Ntcheu area did not get a population transplant during those years. Read concludes that "*it is not difficult to assume that many Nyanja had formerly called themselves Ngoni.*"¹⁵⁸ It is evident that

¹⁵⁵ Michael M. Bonga, "Local Administration in the Ntcheu District with Special Reference to the Ntcheu District Council," Zomba: Chancellor College, History Department, History Seminar Paper 1972 – 3, p. 1.

¹⁵⁶ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 12.

¹⁵⁷ Inger Furseth, Pål Repstad, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion*, Aldershot: Ashgate, p. 169, 2007.

¹⁵⁸ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 12. Taken up in asserting his ethnic identity was also a young man who wanted to be a Chewa, although he might well have been Ngoni from his father's side: Hastings Banda, later to be the first president of the Republic of Malawi. Andrew C. Ross, *Colonialism to Cabinet Crisis*, Zomba: Kachere, 2009, p. 118.

even with the significant upheaval in population statistics, which labour migration had caused, a change of self-perception had taken place. Initially, almost everybody wanted to be Ngoni. Within twenty years, that trend had been reversed. In contrast, the northern Ngoni were able to retain their heritage. In regard to their brothers in the north, the central Ngoni displayed a sense of inferiority. When Y.M. Chibambo, a historian among the northerners, visited the central Ngoni in 1936, he found a forlorn and downhearted people, who nevertheless claimed to be *Ngoni eni eni*, real Ngoni.¹⁵⁹

A colonial scribe like J.A. Barnes depicted the people as subjected and disillusioned.¹⁶⁰ The older Ngoni in the 1930s had a saying “*zonse zatha tsopano*” (*everything has finished now*). Their culture had been diluted. Their ancestral cults had become defunct due to the *mfecane*.¹⁶¹ Their king-god had been killed in the most undignified way and the present ruler looked like a puppet compared to former Ngoni Paramounts. Their military strength had been in steady descent until it faded and their sense of ethnic identity was nothing but a distant memory. With their known world shattered, their sacred canopy torn,¹⁶² the Ngoni were naturally receptive to a reconstruction of their Dasein and Sosein (German for *being-in-the-world* and *how-to-be-in-the-world*.). In a spiritual and cultural way, Zionism has become the distinctive answer to the problem.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁶⁰ John A. Barnes, *The Fort Jameson Ngoni*. nd.

¹⁶¹ James N. Amanze, *African Traditional Religion in Malawi: The Case of the Bimbi Cult*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2002, p. 171.

¹⁶² Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, Garden City: Doubleday, 1967.

3. *Machona* Labour Migration: Africanized Christianity Arrives in Africa

“One does not become a Zionist to do away with apartheid, to stop urban migration or to get better jobs for everybody. One becomes a Zionist in order to gain some control over one’s own life and circumstances...”¹⁶³

a. *The Migrant Labour System – and the Labourers*

Within the British Empire in east Africa, Malawi was singled out as an agricultural economy and as a provider of cheap labour. By 1902, the legislative measures necessary for the plantation system were up and running. Land became easily available for future white plantation owners. Thousands of black men were forced to seek employment in coffee, tea, tobacco and cotton because of the newly introduced taxation system.¹⁶⁴ Their labour, however, only paid for their taxes, with nothing left to live on.¹⁶⁵ They needed space to grow their own food; the only gardens available were often on white-owned land, which led to the *thangata* system. Plantation owners derived the ‘right’ to force Malawians to work on their farms free of charge because of the latter’s presence on ‘their’ lands. This was, of course, a violation of natural law, but oftentimes the masters did not need any legal twist for their requirements. They just demanded the surrounding villagers to come to work; otherwise they would set their huts ablaze.¹⁶⁶ The land was snatched from the Africans, but Zionism was an answer to that problem, too, as we will see.

As I have already pointed out, the building of the impressive *St. Michael and all Angels* Cathedral in Blantyre began the initial trickle of Ngoni workmen into the south. In the 1920s and 30s, this trickle had

¹⁶³ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990 p. 217.

¹⁶⁴ Mtafu A.Z. Manda, *The State and the Labour Movement in Malawi*, Glasgow: Dudu Nsomba Publications, 2000, p. 11.

¹⁶⁵ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, London and Dar-es-Salaam: Bogle – L – Ouverture and Tanzania Publishing House, 1972, pp. 162f; in: Mtafu A. Z. Manda, *The State and the Labour Movement in Malawi*, Glasgow: Dudu Nsomba Publications, 2000, p. 12.

¹⁶⁶ Landeg White, *Magomero*, Cambridge: University Press, 1987, pp. 111-119, 166f.

become a formidable river, which flowed into the national plantation industries within the country, for the local Lomwe and Mang'anja workforce was insufficient in numbers to sustain the coffee and tea plantations in Thyolo, Mulanje and Bvumbwe. What also became quite common were Ngoni men marrying women from different locations and different ethnic backgrounds. Those marriages created bonds, which had their own weaknesses and strengths.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, Ngoni men and other Malawians left by the thousands for the mining industry in Zimbabwe and South Africa.¹⁶⁸ Gold was discovered in Johannesburg in 1885. This created a massive demand for human labour.

I will soon describe the often dehumanizing conditions in the labour compounds. Before that, it has to be borne in mind that many Malawians wanted to go abroad, at least those that had no prior *mtchona* experience.¹⁶⁹ In this sense the word *Diaspora* comes to mind. According to Jewish tradition, *Diaspora* included the voluntary element of exile, whereas the word *galut* denotes forced dispersion.¹⁷⁰ Many young men had unrealistic dreams about their journey to "Joni" (Johannesburg). They thought to arrive in a land of milk and honey.¹⁷¹ Truth to tell, the regional labour system, national tax demands, scarcity of local employment and

¹⁶⁷ Megan Vaughan, "Famine Analysis and Family Relations: Nyasaland in 1949", in: Steven Feierman, John M. Janzen, eds., *The Social Basis of Health and Healing in Africa*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, pp. 75f.

¹⁶⁸ John C. Abraham, *Report on Nyasaland Natives in the Union of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia*, London: Published for the Government of Nyasaland, 1937. Wiseman Chirwa, *Theba is Power. Rural Labour, Migrancy and Fishing in Malawi, 1890s-1985*, PhD, 1992. Robert B. Boeder, *Malawians Abroad. The History of Labour Emigration from Malawi to its Neighbors, 1890 to the Present*, PhD, Michigan State University, 1974. Charles van Onselen, *Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia 1900 – 1933*, London: Pluto Press, 1951. Commission for Technical Cooperation in Africa South of the Sahara, *Migrant Workers in Africa South of the Sahara*, Abidjan: Sixth Intern African Labour Conference, 1961, NAM.

¹⁶⁹ Landeg White, *Magomero*, Cambridge: University Press, 1987, p. 222, 259.

¹⁷⁰ George Shepperson, "African Diaspora: Concept and Context," in Joseph E. Harris, ed., *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, Washington: Howard University Press, 1982, p. 47.

¹⁷¹ Masiye Tembo, *Touched by His Grace. A Ngoni Story of Tragedy and Triumph*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005, p. 48.

private needs of Malawian households left no other choice but for the men to go abroad. This had some advantages, which also the *machona* themselves saw, but might not come easily to some tender-minded western ethnologists. Other anthropologists do understand this perspective; see for example Erikson's findings among Malayalees working in the Gulf.¹⁷² To the Ngoni, there was first of all the money. The lowest wages of all southern African countries were paid in Mozambique and Malawi. To get out of them and find employment meant automatic increase.¹⁷³ Malawians were known as "Nyasas" during that era. They had an excellent reputation in southern Africa as hard-working and honest labourers. The two major recruiting agencies in the country were *WENELA: Witwatersrand Native Labour Organization* and *TEBA: Temporary Employment Bureau of Africa*. Labour recruiters even went out into the countryside and combed the villages for suitable human material.¹⁷⁴ The mines favoured foreign workers, of course. They were less of a hassle when it came to low wages and revolting tendencies. Foreigners were more vulnerable to dismissal and, with their families left behind, were free from domestic distractions.

Many young Ngoni men left after their wives became pregnant for the first time.¹⁷⁵ Some ethnic groups in this region hold to the custom to refuse sexual relations till the child is weaned.¹⁷⁶ Seen from this intimate perspective, a two-year term might come in handy. Moreover, they fancied that one or two terms (four to five years) would give them a sufficient financial capital upon their return. In general, Ngoni men did not send their money home. They gave a little to visitors, who would then

¹⁷² Thomas H. Erikson, *Small Places, Large Issues*, London: Pluto Press, 2001, p. 302.

¹⁷³ Mtafu A.Z. Manda, *The State and the Labour Movement in Malawi*, Glasgow: D. Nsomba Publications, 2000, p. 14.

¹⁷⁴ Margaret Read, *Children of their Fathers*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968, p. 51.

¹⁷⁵ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 151.

¹⁷⁶ Johan W.M. van Breugel, *Chewa Traditional Religion*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2001, p. 204.

share it with their home folks. Most of the money was saved and later spent on cattle.¹⁷⁷

The majority worked in the mines and related industries, still many were sought after for Rhodesian farms, some of them found employment as cooks and tailors with the white bosses. The men were by and large housed in compounds, and grouped with their kin and ethnic peers. There was in general a strong bond between men with same ethnic backgrounds. Ties were even stronger between Ngoni coming from the same clan.¹⁷⁸ Work was hard and life, apart from work, oftentimes dull. The *machona* were in exile, in a permanent liminal state, physically exhausted and oftentimes sick. Contagious diseases like syphilis, tuberculosis and scurvy were widespread. I will elaborate more on the health system in chapter 4, but this much can be said now: Colonialism as such was a mental and physical trauma.¹⁷⁹ Migrant labour was a totalitarian exploitative enterprise on continental scale. Africans paid for British profits with their health and their social world shattered. Mine work was a sickening ordeal, both the toil and the social disintegration made the people ill.¹⁸⁰ Medical care, if provided, was purely biomedical and could not embrace the more holistic treatment offered by African herbalists and prophet-healers. Most widespread of all was homesickness. Many men married a second wife and from thereon lived oscillating family lives, in their home country and abroad. Prostitution and child labour were common among the *machona*, beer brewing and drinking seem to have been the most favourite pastime.¹⁸¹ *“Labour migration was objectionable on moral grounds. It split families and*

¹⁷⁷ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 136.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹⁷⁹ Steven Feierman, “Ethnographic Regions – Healing, Power and History”, in: Harry G. West, Tracy J. Luedke, eds., *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 187.

¹⁸⁰ Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills. Colonial Power and African Illness*, Stanford: University Press, 1991, pp. 38f.

¹⁸¹ Peter G. Forster, *T. Cullen Young: Missionary and Anthropologist*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2003, p. 135.

*opened African men's eyes to the seamier side of the white man's culture."*¹⁸²

Official religion did not feature big in the compounds. Some churches, for example the CCAP from Malawi, recognized the spiritual needs of their members abroad and the danger of losing them to other churches.¹⁸³ However, the small number of chaplains could not serve the needy masses.¹⁸⁴ Their efforts were also hindered because the mine workers perceived the main churches, including the RCC, as their employers' watchdogs.¹⁸⁵ Because of this other movements flourished, notably those who were anti-establishment like the Watchtower.¹⁸⁶ Migrants moving into the bigger cities felt a certain sense of liberty from the oftentimes tight control of their rural mission churches.¹⁸⁷ Africans would naturally look to the churches for remedies for their social and physical ills. Falling short to serve the spiritual needs, the Reformed, Roman Catholic and Anglican churches did very little to help them physically. There was at that time no Christian theology in place which would provide for the healing of the body and take witchcraft and demonization seriously – as the traditional religion did.¹⁸⁸ One indicator for this is the *mchape* movement, which swept through this region in the 1930s.¹⁸⁹ Only a few studies do exist about the spiritual aspect of the *machona* experience, like van Onselen's work about the Watchtower Movement among migrant

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹⁸³ Christoff M. Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi. The History of the Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian 1889-1962*, PhD, University of Stellenbosch, 1980, pp. 110ff.

¹⁸⁴ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2000, p. 242.

¹⁸⁵ Charles van Onselen, *Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia 1900 – 1933*, London: Pluto Press, 1951, pp. 183, 186.

¹⁸⁶ H.J. Greschat, *The Watchtower Movement in Central Africa*, pp. 16ff.

¹⁸⁷ Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985, p. 172.

¹⁸⁸ Matthew Schoffeleers, *Mang'anja Traditional Religion*, Zomba: Kachere, 2008, p. 309. The passage deals with *mazinda* spirits, which the Mang'anja hold to have been imported by migrant workers.

¹⁸⁹ Joseph C. Chakanza, "Provisional Annotated Chronological List of Witch-Finding Movements in Malawi, 1850-1980, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 15, 1985, pp. 227-243.

labourers¹⁹⁰ or a novel by Nancy-Harper, in which she emphatically describes the religious side on the compounds.¹⁹¹

Gathering so many men of different origins together created an enormous platform for cultural, linguistic, musical and spiritual exchange. The compound became a marketplace, with the *machona* themselves as recipients and carriers of new religious ideas, healing cults, spirit movements and churches. They became brokers, who shuttled to and fro between two very different worlds. They derived power from channeling money, goods, skills, information and religion between those domains.¹⁹² In stark contrast to traditional cults, religion became *portable*. In his interesting book *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell studies the spread of ideas, diseases and fashion trends.¹⁹³ Ideas and trends are promoted by three different kinds of people, which he calls *connectors*, *mavens* and *salesmen*. *Connectors* are those whose joy and strength is to introduce people to each other. They thrive in relationships; seemingly never can get enough of them. *Connectors* are bringing the world together by serving as relational links between friends, groups and races. Persons designated as *mavens* are those that accumulate knowledge, as the Yiddish root of the word suggests. In a circle of acquaintances, the *maven* would be the one person to ask if we want to know how to get the best deal for a new bicycle, repair a broken iron or what to plant in the garden. *Mavens* not only gather information, they are a source for it and willing advisors. Religious *mavens* are people endowed with spiritual authority, their reputation always wider than their affiliation. *Mavens*, however strong their influence, are not persuaders. That role belongs to the *salesmen*. They can attract people to themselves and to their ideas or products, too. *Salesmen* usually have the gift of the gab and are able to usher people into new obligations. If projected sociologically, the migrant

¹⁹⁰ Charles van Onselen, *Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia 1900 – 1933*, London: Pluto Press, 1951.

¹⁹¹ Spiwe Nancy-Harper, *Trials and Tribulations*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 2000.

¹⁹² Harry G. West, Tracy J. Luedke, eds., “Healing Divides: Therapeutic Border Work in Southeast Africa”, in: *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 6.

¹⁹³ Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point*, New York: Back Bay Books, 2000, pp. 30ff.

workers compounds buzzed with connectors, mavens and salesmen. On offer were jobs, sewing machines, pills, cash, shoes, beer, rabbits, footballs, clothes, bicycles, bus tickets, Watchtower doctrines, spooky fetishes, Pentecostal experiences and Zionism, too.

b. Enter Zionism

The first African visitor to Zion, Illinois, who arrived in 1897, was Rev. J. U. Büchler, a South African Congregationalist minister, originally from Switzerland. Dowie promptly made him “overseer of Africa.” Next was Edgar Mahon, formerly with the Salvation Army, who started working on behalf of the CCACZ in 1902, Orange Free State. The first emissary from the USA was Daniel Bryant, who arrived in Johannesburg in 1904. Dowie had made him apostle over all of Africa.

Dowie’s missionaries merged, curiously, with a Zion that had already been established. The DRC missionary Peter L. LeRoux had opened a “healing centre” and, the name derived from a Moravian hymnal (*Zion Liedere*), had called it *Zion*.¹⁹⁴ Le Roux plays a prominent role in the early history of Zionism and Pentecostalism in South Africa.¹⁹⁵ He had been a student of Andrew Murray (1828-1917) whose teachings, especially about holiness and the Holy Spirit, had made a deep impression on him.¹⁹⁶ He entered the DRC ministry, but withdrew from the church due to the racism of white members in his congregation.¹⁹⁷ The church he founded was called *Zion Kerk*, located at Wakkerstrom, a Zulu area. The congregation had grown to four hundred members by 1902, most of them Zulu. Two years later Bryant came from the CCACZ in Illinois and baptized 141 Zionists, including Peter L. LeRoux. There was a period when Pentecostalism and Zionism blended into each other, for example the first AFM church in the country congregated in a black Zion church in

¹⁹⁴ Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985, p. 185.

¹⁹⁵ Ulf Strohhöhn, *Pentecostalism in Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere, 2002, p. 35.

¹⁹⁶ William Lindner, *Andrew Murray*, Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1996. Johannes Du Plessis, *The Life of Andrew Murray of South Africa*, London: Marshall, 1920.

¹⁹⁷ Irving Hexham, Karla Poewe-Hexham, “South Africa,” in: Stanley M. Burgess, ed., *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003, p. 228.

Doornfontein. One can also find South African Zionists speaking in tongues, which gives evidence of the crossover between the two movements in their infancy. LeRoux left his local Zion church in the hands of his black co-workers and eventually joined J.G. Lake when Pentecostalism arrived on South African shores in 1908. LeRoux had also received the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the same year. He became the second president of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, in 1915, and held that post until his death in 1943. The AFM became home to both black and white Christians, with both sections more or less segregated until the 1990s. Zionism, however, attracted very few whites. LeRoux had always been a missionary to the Zulu, a people also called the Nguni in this study. This is one (historical) reason why Zionism has a prerogative with Zulu culture and language. In South Africa, Zionism is, parallel to Malawi, strongest among the Nguni; the churches are numerous in Swaziland, too. For South Africa, we are probably closest to the truth when we assume a mutual pollination to have taken place between Zulu culture, American Zionism and an infusion of fresh Pentecostalism. Attempts to explain Zionist practices simply as cultural elements in disguise fail as much as those theories, which claim religion to have evolved in a cultural vacuum.¹⁹⁸ In every case, such as polygamy, initiation rites or purification ceremonies, a careful dissection of historical, cultural and religious elements is necessary. For Malawian Zionism, this is my task at hand.

The most influential and largest Zionist denominations in South Africa have their origin in the period just described. Some split over LeRoux's succession, others became Pentecostals for a short time, only to return to Zionism. In addition, secessionist fires were fueled by doctrinal disputes, personal leadership aspirations, ethnic differences and Ethiopianism. The latter includes political reasons, which underlie the origin of independent churches in South Africa during the apartheid era.¹⁹⁹ All these forces have

¹⁹⁸ Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa 1450-1950*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1996, p. 501.

¹⁹⁹ Lawrencia Kwark, "The Reinvention of Tradition in African Independent Churches as a Means to Engage Modernity", in: Dawid Venter, ed., *Engaging Modernity*, Westport: Praeger, 2004, pp. 136f.

created such a bewildering array of denominations that it might be nigh impossible to see through the maze. The movements grew so much in numbers and variety that already in the year 1932 more than 400 different Zionist denominations had been formed.²⁰⁰ Between 1946 and 1960 the Zionist churches grew by two hundred percent, against an increase of the total Black population by fifty percent.²⁰¹ In the 21st century, Zionism is the strongest religious grouping in South Africa and the ZCC is the most numerous denomination in the country. Hayes interprets the main marks of contemporary Zionism in South Africa to be faith healing, food taboos, settlements and triune immersion (this differs with Malawi).²⁰² The name *Zion* as such enjoys strong affinity.

Gauteng province, formerly called the Witwatersrand, which includes Pretoria and Johannesburg, became the country's economic hub and political center. It naturally drew a lot of missionary activity, too. There also met fiery Zulu evangelists, preaching the Gospel according to Zion, and migrant workers from Malawi.

c. Malawian Converts

What happened next can hardly be overestimated in its significance. The Malawian Ngoni met their distant Zulu cousins, who came to them, clad in white robes, proclaiming a new kingdom. The Ngoni from Malawi felt naturally drawn toward the Zulu. They looked upon them as brothers, oftentimes as elder brothers and guardians.

The spiritual reasons, which drew Malawians into Zion's fold, can be quintessenced as empowerment.²⁰³ Many of Zion's evangelists define conversion in the negative. Becoming a Christian, to them, is the absence of vices. It leads to an inner cleansing process and to the reorientation of values. Ideally, abstinence is not only demanded, the believer becomes empowered to live that kind of life through the Spirit and the

²⁰⁰ Allan Anderson, *Zion and Pentecost*, p. 62.

²⁰¹ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990 p. 152.

²⁰² Int. Steve Hayes, Pretoria, 13.12.2004.

²⁰³ Ulf Strohhorn, *Pentecostalism in Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere, 2002, pp. 79ff.

community.²⁰⁴ Conversion could happen quickly and “change everything” and “solve every problem,” as the preachers proclaimed. Baptism by immersion was an apt expression of such a radical change. The need for physical and mental healing has already been described. It proved to be attractive, both the possibility of receiving and bestowing it. Finally, becoming a Zionist was probably the most straightforward way in those days to achieve status and office in the church. There were no Bible colleges or seminaries. Qualification for the ministry came through charismatic confirmation, evangelistic success and faithfulness to the church.

With Zulu Zionists, the Malawians found their culture, albeit now in religious garments, which had been lost with their parents. The collective memory of Ngoni glory, however, had not faded. One aged *mtchona* told us how he came to South Africa, met the Zionists, accepted their faith and learned their language, too. This Zulu was the language that his parents had lost around the turn of the century. Zionism provided shelter among anarchic conditions of life, supplied relationships to estranged and uprooted people living in exile. The Zulu boosted the identity and self-confidence of their Malawian Ngoni brothers. One example is the story of Herbert Kakhobwe, initially a *mtchona* Pentecostal. This Ngoni had a much stronger sense of ethnic and ecclesiastic identity if compared with his fellow-founder Robert Chinguwo, a Chewa. Kakhobwe rejected cooperation with white missionaries, came to the meetings clad in robes and in 1948 broke away from the AFM to start the Apostolic Faith Church (7), a Zionist denomination still in existence at Zipirana village, Ntcheu and in Mangochi.²⁰⁵

Dowie’s Zion in the USA drew people from all walks of life, but his main subscribers were the impoverished urban communities in the Midwest. Comaroff draws parallels between this society and black South Africans at the turn of the century.²⁰⁶ Industrialization and labour

²⁰⁴ Cyril C. Okorocha, *The Meaning of Religious Conversion in Africa*, Aldershot: Avebury, 1987, p. 235.

²⁰⁵ Ulf Strohehn, *Pentecostalism in Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere, 2002, pp. 73ff.

²⁰⁶ Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985, p. 177.

immigration had created societies void of a collective being. The separation of man-God, self-others, body-soul and state-church had torn social fabrics apart, which left the masses disillusioned yet they yearned for a “heile Welt” (to use the German phrase), an unbroken, healed and happy world. Set in contrast to such yearning was the devil. The evil one became personalized, much different from what people used to hear from liberal pulpits of the day. The evil lured in theatres, lodges, bars, taverns and yes, hospitals, too. That the devil had been turned loose on them was not hard to imagine for a twentieth century working-class industrial labourer, much less for a Malawian lost in the urban jungle in South Africa during the same period. While all this spelt destruction and disease, Zion stood for construction and healing. Their clear-cut dichotomy of evil – good, faithfulness – adultery, beer – Spirit, livelihood – squandering, promiscuous lyrics – holy dancing, anarchy – hierarchy and individualism – church left no doubt about the struggle, the stakes and the eventual victor.

It is in this *machona* context significant to understand the forces and options which worked on the men. As we have seen, going abroad was not really a matter of choice for many Malawians. Labour and market forces, the family fortune and pressing tax demands often left no other way but to go south. Once there, one did not have a great variety of professions to choose from. Back home, taboos and traditions prevailed when it came to freedom of movement, place of residence and marriage, too. Political independence was out of the question, both in Malawi and abroad. There was one, and only one, area, in which a man could make a choice. This was his religious affiliation. Therefore, it should not surprise too much that a church, which offered not only spiritual values, but a return to one’s cultural roots, was the ultimate answer to the question of choice. Zion was the distinct difference; it stood for total change in a world where one could not change much. Religious affiliation was the only window of opportunity open to a man, by becoming a Zionist, he made most out of it.

d. Back Home

Back home, the migrant labour economy greatly damaged the social and economic welfare of Malawi. *Machona* were fare-welled like boys going to war. They were literally called “*the lost legion, many of whom never return.*”²⁰⁷ There is indeed evidence from the Ngoni, that even those who had died in the foreign land, were, *in absentia*, still honored by proper mourning rites, such as sacrifices to the spirits and ritual shaving, all in order to bring back the spirit to the village.²⁰⁸ Again we see a difference between the Mzimba and the central Ngoni. In the northern kingdom, better marriage ties were provided for those wives whose husbands had gone abroad. The cultural setting meant that the wife stays with her husband’s family. Read is of the opinion that the wife was better cared for among the northern Ngoni.²⁰⁹ This might be different from case to case, but her faithfulness to her absent husband was certainly better safeguarded in the northern, virilocal system. Around Ntcheu, the Ngoni wives stayed at their own villages. The internal or external persuasion to remarry during a prolonged absence of the husband was easier yielded to. Households without husbands and fathers (and those were in the majority in the 1930s) were naturally weaker and prone to suffer more during hunger and sickness.²¹⁰

Viewed on the national scale, the migrant labour system can only be regarded as a massive catastrophe to the population. More Malawians worked outside than inside the country. For example in 1936, 120,000 Malawians earned their living abroad, while 49,000 were working in Malawi.²¹¹ A count from a Ngoni district in Zambia showed that in May

²⁰⁷ George Shepperson, Thomas Price, *Independent African*, Edinburgh: University Press, 1987, p. 412.

²⁰⁸ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, pp. 194f.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

²¹⁰ Megan Vaughan, “Famine Analysis and Family Relations: Nyasaland in 1949”, in: Steven Feierman, John M. Janzen, eds., *The Social Basis of Health and Healing in Africa*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, pp. 68ff.

²¹¹ Mtafu A.Z. Manda, *The State and the Labour Movement in Malawi*, Glasgow: Dudu Nsomba Publications, 2000, p. 18.

1947, out of 1739 Ngoni males, 72% were away from their villages because of work.²¹² Some local figures from the central region of Malawi: in the years 1938 and 1939, Chikwita village had a total of 22 men, 13 of them were *machona*. Mangozo village had a male population of 60, nine of them were away but there were still 18 widows in the village. Mchakhata village had 71 men, 30 of them were working abroad.²¹³ Another figure says that at one time eighty percent of workers on Rhodesian farms were from Malawi.²¹⁴

Now, the *machona* came back home. They had grown a beard, carried a staff and spoke of nothing but Zion. Initially, they were the odd ones out. However, the sheer numbers of returning migrants helped the movement tremendously. As the figures have shown, Zion became the dominant expression of the Christian faith around Ntcheu and this weight helped them to successfully create a parallel society, not just a subculture. Prior to the *machona* going abroad, many of them had at least been nominal Christians and some had been grassroots preachers or had held other symbolic offices without real authority in the mission churches. That was about to change. In the Diaspora, they were disciples. Now they had come back as apostles and several of them became founding bishops of Zion in this country. The great difference between slavery and the *machona* era is that the slaves, who were born in Africa, were usually despised by others, including their fellows. They were mimicked, seen as an uncultivated brood and brandished as “salt waters.”²¹⁵ Whereas the far-travelled *machona* were perceived as great men, their experience of having lived in at least two cultures validated them in front of the home crowds and gave them authority.

Two tenets are outstanding. For one, the men now lived and proclaimed a moral life. There was always the fear at home that the

²¹² John A. Barnes, *The Fort Jameson Ngoni*, n. d., p. 249.

²¹³ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 138.

²¹⁴ Mtafu A.Z. Manda, *The State and the Labour Movement in Malawi*, Glasgow: Dudu Nsomba Publications, 2000, p. 19.

²¹⁵ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 53.

husband could come home with another wife, or not turn up at all because he had forsaken his home family. Most Zionists in Malawi are monogamous. Zionism produced good husbands and better fathers, something that made it easier for the wives to accept the faith, too. In line with international research, the history of Zionism in Malawi confirms that family reunification strengthens religious bonds, too.²¹⁶ They countered the social ills of the time, beer drinking, gambling and fornication, to name those, which threatened the family's existence. Yet the even bigger attraction was physical healing. It was *the* answer to the needs of Malawians. The *machona* came home and were greeted because they had found another source with which the people could tap into in their struggle with spiritual powers.²¹⁷ Most testimonies, up to this day, show that the people became Zionists because of physical healing. There were no country-wide facilities for the entire population to receive medical help. If so, then "white medicine", together with traditional healing devices, were now rebuffed by the Zionists, who happily quoted Dowie, their faith hero, on the issue.

This again serves as one further explanation why Zionism is stronger in the central region. In the north, among the Tumbuka (and Ngoni) a spirit-healing cult has been in existence for centuries, the *vimbuza* complex.²¹⁸ It is not central, for its officers, the *nchimi*, reside in different places. Some of them have a reputation that draws clientele from far away and even from neighbouring countries. There were and are *sing'anga* and herbalists around Ntcheu, too, but *vimbuza* is hardly known in the central kingdom. Zion became the healing cult of the Maseko Ngoni.

The movement underwent a big change as it was introduced in Malawi. In South Africa, it is a predominantly urban religion.²¹⁹ Its tenets,

²¹⁶ Inger Furseth, Pål Repstad, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion*, Aldershot: Ashgate, p. 171, 2007.

²¹⁷ Richard Gray, *Black Christians and White Missionaries*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990, p. 102.

²¹⁸ Boston J. Soko, *The Vimbuza Phenomenon: Disease or Art*, Zomba: Chancellor College, French Department, occasional paper, 1981. Steven M. Friedson, *Dancing Prophets*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

²¹⁹ David Chidester, *Religions of South Africa*, London: Routledge, 1992, p. 138.

e.g. the emphasis on holiness, fitted well into the context of peri-urban neighbourhoods. In Malawi, the believers, churches and headquarters can mainly be found in the countryside. One reason for this is, of course, that Malawi did not have a Soweto at the beginning of the 20th century. The other and more significant reason is that the *machona* willfully returned to their villages, for township and compound life abroad had given them enough distaste for it. (There are a few Zion settlements in rural South Africa and Zimbabwe, too, but the bulk of followers live in the cities.) Others settled in the rural areas because their stint abroad had given them the means to do so. A sewing machine could be afforded, a plot of land was finally acquired or a herd of cattle was purchased. In Malawi, the construction of Zion did not need to remain a symbol. Contrary to the chaos in the industrial metropolis, the *machona* could create a safe rural haven of purity and security in the village. We will soon visit some of them.

3. History: Zionism in Malawi 1922 – 2011

“I wonder if people who are culturally ill can ever become spiritually healthy.”¹

1. The Distant Originator: John George Phillips

A new class emerged in Africa at the turn of the 20th century. They were called “the new men” and initially came out of the shelter of mission compounds.² Africans had different reasons to leave their villages and stay in the vicinity of the Europeans. Some of them tried to be strong Christians, but found their natural surrounding too hostile to exercise their faith.³ Others were sick and came to rely on the pill box ministry of the early missionaries. People not accepted by the surrounding society sought refuge at the mission, too. Those were former slaves, prisoners of war and lepers. As years went by, schools in close proximity to mission stations became part of budding towns and the first pupils stayed on with the mission as carpenters, brick layers, cooks, catechists and teachers. People thus brought up with a good dose of western education and distance to the traditional lore of things had a mind open to change. Status and birth right counted little, achievement through their own efforts was all that mattered. The “new men” were not afraid to use technology and travel. They were able to express themselves, both in word and writing. These groups had previously not been mainstream African society, but their lot and the perception of them changed during

¹ Charles H. Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2010. p. 378.

² Robert Gray, *Black Christians and White Missionaries*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990, pp. 62f.

³ Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996, p. 73.

the period under survey. It seemed to others that they had “*stolen a march on most African societies*.”⁴ It is this group, too, which was later at the forefront of the struggle for independence.

When at last the colonial regimes awoke to the incipient dangers and challenge to their authority posed by what one of them, the governor-general of Nigeria, termed this ‘extraordinary irruption [sic!] of hedge-schools,’ the African renaissance had already begun. The colonial powers could not turn back the clock; missionary education had become the Achilles’ heel of colonialism.⁵

It is therefore not surprising, that such a “mission child” became instrumental in bringing Zionism to this country. The origin of Zionism in Malawi must first of all be attributed to John George Phillips, although he achieved this from the other end, as a *mtchona* who did not return. He was the son of a Tonga chief, born on Likoma Island and initially Anglican.⁶ Shepperson and Price claim that the Tonga people had become the most important element amongst the Nyasaland *machona* to South Africa whereby novel concepts were introduced into the protectorate.⁷ This comes as no surprise since the Tonga who, from time to time put up a real fight, were eventually dominated by the Ngoni and naturally sought refuge under stronger wings, soon to be the British administration. Phillips was named after a resident Anglican missionary. As a boy, he lived close to the church on Likoma Island.⁸ The white John G. Phillips died from

⁴ Robert Gray, *Black Christians and White Missionaries*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990, p. 97.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ E.F. Colville, Provincial Commissioner, Application for to Start a Branch of the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church, 12.3.1923, NAM.

⁷ George Shepperson, Thomas Price, *Independent African*, Edinburgh: University Press, 1987, pp. 154f. Van Velsen gives detailed account of how many Tonga got the best jobs through skillful manipulation of relationships. J. van Velsen, *The Politics of Kinship. A Study in Social Manipulation among the Lakeside Tonga*, Manchester: University Press, 1964, p. xiii.

⁸ George H. Wilson, *The History of the Universities Mission to Central Africa*, London: UMCA, 1936, p. 109.

fever in 1906, an event that made a deep impression on the young Malawian.⁹



Henceforth he came to view the missionary's death as martyrdom. Phillips seemed to have enjoyed a good dose of education on the Island; his favourite subject was Bible studies.¹⁰ He renounced to become his father's successor as chief at Ntchisi, but wanted to live and work for the church. He first helped to reassemble the *Chauncy Maples* for the Anglican Church on the Lake,¹¹ which became, as long as the students could muster bouts of seasickness, the only theological seminary in Africa housed on a steamer.¹² Afterwards he pioneered a local congregation at Ntchisi, helped by the missionary A.G.B. Glossop. Phillips left his home country for the first time in 1901 when he found employment at a European hospital in Harare. The

second time he left in 1904, together with 860 other Malawians who were heading for the mines on the Rand. He was the youngest in the party, still many looked up to him as their spiritual leader. He was able to read and preach and did so every evening on the long journey from here to South Africa. Some have argued that the education, which Livingstonia Mission or Likoma offered to the Malawians, was too good for the village

⁹ A.E.M. Anderson-Morehead, *The History of the Universities Mission to Central Africa*, Vol.1, 1859-1909, London: UMCA, p. 301.

¹⁰ NaoSA, Pretoria, File NTS 1457, ref. No. 154/214, Part 1.

¹¹ A.E.M. Anderson-Morehead, *The Building of the Chauncy Maples*, n. d. Society of Malawi, Blantyre.

¹² Bengt Sundkler, Christopher Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 480.

context.¹³ It thus effected labour immigration and created further dependence on the white man. With Phillips, this might initially sound true, but does not stand the test. To him, education had an overall liberating function. He was able to glean the best out of different contexts and make those educational concepts work for him in his very own theological persuasion.

He suffered from chest pain as so many mineworkers did. Medical treatment had failed to cure him and he therefore developed a lively interest in physical healing and healing movements. He devoured “Leaves of Healing” and similar tracts until, about 1909, he came from believing to seeing. Phillips met the AFM pioneer John G. Lake, who laid hands on and healed him instantly. This experience spurred him to quit his job and devote all his time to spiritual work. He preached in many mine compounds, baptized those who believed and laid hands on the sick. Moreover, the mine managers cooperated with Phillips, giving him rooms for their meetings, even literacy classes were held. He did this work under the banner of the *Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion*. The question arises why Phillips did not continue with the AFM after J.G. Lake had healed him, for physical healing usually cements loyalty in African Pentecostal churches. First, differences between Pentecostals and Zionists were not yet so developed and pronounced at that time. Moreover, Phillips stated years later in a letter that he saw the Zionist movement as the more ‘original’ church, not the AFM. That was true regarding J.G. Lake, who was an elder with J.A. Dowie in Zion, then later became one of the leaders at Azusa and from there moved to South Africa to establish the work of the AFM. Therefore, at least to Phillips, the AFM had its roots in Zion. This was further underlined by the fact that the AFM moved into the former headquarters of Zionism in South Africa, the Old Presbyterian Church on Bree Street in Johannesburg, a move he must have witnessed.¹⁴

¹³ Peter G. Forster, *T. Cullen Young: Missionary and Anthropologist*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2003, p. 121.

¹⁴ Letter from J.G. Phillips, CCACZ, to the Native Commissioner, Johannesburg, 27.8.1923. NaoSA, File NTS, 1457, 154/214, Part 1.

Meanwhile in the USA, Zion, Illinois dispensed of the services of Modred Powell, who had been leading the work in South Africa until 1917. No supervising missionary was available and Paul M. Mabilitsa became the overseer in charge of the entire work.¹⁵ Mabilitsa, in turn, only stayed for three years until he started his own church (The Christian Apostolic Church in Zion of South Africa) in Alexandra Township.¹⁶ Phillips, however, stayed. He rose through the ranks of the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion, was ordained as a pastor and eventually succeeded Mabilitsa as overseer in charge over all of South Africa, in 1920. This was a remarkable career, especially for a black man at that time, moreover for a stranger from Malawi making his way in South Africa. (In this way, Phillips had only one equal, Clements Kadalie; leader of the large Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of South Africa, who also stemmed from Malawi.)¹⁷ The above picture of Phillips, showing him as bishop of the church, was part of an obituary, which his daughter Mary left with Professor Sundkler.¹⁸ One thing that may have endeared Phillips to Mabilitsa was that both had royal blood in their veins but had renounced their chieftainships for the ministry. Phillips travelled much and established churches all over South Africa, even in Mozambique. However, he never resettled in Malawi.

a. Preview

What follows are three subsequent generations of Zionism in Malawi. The founding generation started in 1922, when the first *machona* pioneers came back. This first era had only six different denominations in the country, until 1948. The second generation was distinctively different from the first, it lasted until 1976. I have tried to draw the lines of the

¹⁵ Letter from CCACZ, Johannesburg, to the Secretary for Native Affairs, Pretoria, 2.8.1917, NaoSA, file no. 1386/14/387.

¹⁶ The Christian Apostolic Church in Zion of South Africa. Bengt Sundkler, *Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists*, London: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 59.

¹⁷ Steven Feierman, "Ethnographic Regions – Healing, Power and History", in: H.G. West, T.J. Luedke, eds., *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 193.

¹⁸ Bengt Sundkler, Christopher Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 480.

third generation until 2010. Malawi, and Zionism with it, has gone through tremendous shifts and changes since 1922. Zionists have established their theological tenets and cultural identity during the first generation. New denominations were born, others have become extinct because they either clung to their outdated tradition or sought to reinterpret their heritage in the light of social, medical and ecclesiastical changes. The wide array of denominations provides for anachronisms. An abundance of issues faces us, which, as they relate to the origin of denominations are listed in this chapter, and, as they relate to theological or social milieus, will be discussed in chapters 5 and 6. What marks a generation? There are no clear-cutting dividers, but I tried to follow the big issues, the bones of contention, which have moved the Zionists during each era. They are drumming for the first, healing for the second and authority for the third generation respectively.

2. The First Generation of Zionist Churches: 1922 - 1947

a. The Christian Apostolic Church in Zion (1) – Bishop Genesis Mbedza – 1922

It was during Phillips' tenure that the Malawian Genesis Mbedza joined the CCACZ. He was born on the Mozambiquian side of Ntcheu district, Angonia. His family came to Blantyre in 1901 and settled at Sankani near Mpemba, south of Blantyre. As a lad, Mbedza joined the ZIM. He left for South Africa in 1918 and there got converted to the CCACZ. Mbedza had two close *machona* friends. Samuel Mbeta, of Chunga village, Blantyre District, also a member of the ZIM, and Benson Mzeru, from Mzeru Village, Namcholi, Blantyre District, who had formerly attended CCAP schools. These three men wanted to return to Malawi by 1922. Phillips saw a chance to spread the work of the CCACZ in his home country. He ordained Mbedza and in December 1922 the three pioneers were on their way. Phillips wrote a letter which his evangelists carried with them.¹⁹

¹⁹ Letter from John G. Philipps to the Officer in Charge at the Native Affairs Dept., Blantyre, Johannesburg, 6.12.1922, NAM.

The Officer in charge,
Native Affairs Department
Blantyre Township

Sir,

The bearer, Rev. Jenesie [sic!] Mbedza, has been instructed by me to present himself at your office, as he has been ordained as a minister of this church during the period he has spent here in the Transvaal. He is now returning to his village in which he was born and he has been instructed to preach there the Gospel which he has been taught.

I may state for your guidance that this church is well and favourably known to the Native Affairs Department of the Union of South Africa.

We preach an Evangelical Gospel of Salvation through Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and have nothing in common with Russelism (note: "Watch Tower") and other unscriptural delusions which in these days have attracted so many among the native races.

Recommending this native preacher to your kindly and sympathetic interest."
December, 6th, 1922.

Rev. John Geo. Phillips
Overseer in charge for South Africa,
Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion,
PO Box 6418, Johannesburg

They arrived at the Provincial Commissioner in Zomba and applied for permission to start a branch of the church in their home area, Ntcheu. The Provincial Commissioner Colville did not know what to do with them

and therefore asked the ZIM for advice.²⁰ Mbedza had told the commissioner that his church differed only in the mode of baptism from the ZIM, “they practise three dippings.” They made clear that there was no intention to build schools, which was the primary mission method of both Catholic and mainline Protestant churches at that time. Neither had they planned to erect any church buildings. Philipps, in his recommendation letter to the authorities, stated that, “*We preach an Evangelical Gospel of Salvation through Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and have nothing in common with Russelism...*”²¹ Mbedza tried to give his Zionism a positive identity by showing similarities to the ZIM, a church that was registered with the *boma*. Phillips, on the other hand, a Tonga by birth, identified negatively by distancing Zion to the Watch Tower movement. He remembered quite well how Elliot Kamwana had caused unrest in Tongaland, which led to his arrest in 1909.²² The reasoning and caution on both sides show how sensitive the enterprise of starting a new church was in post-Chilembwe Nyasaland.²³

Nevertheless, the *machona* were given permission to go ahead, under the condition not to proselytize members of other churches. Zion, under the banner of the CCACZ, was thus registered as a church in 1926. Mbedza pioneered the congregation at Kadwala village, which is the first Zion church in Malawi. Kadwala lies on the road between Mphepozinayi and Mazonda, north-east of Ntcheu *boma*. We still found a CCACZ church with a few members there during our field research in 2005. Another congregation he started was near Nancholi, south of Blantyre, close to Sankani village where he had moved to in 1901. His name is still well known among the Zionists in the area.

²⁰ Letter from E.F. Colville, Provincial Commissioner, to the ZEM at Mitsidi, Blantyre, 12.3.1923, NAM.

²¹ Letter from John G. Philipps to the Officer in Charge at the Native Affairs Dept., Blantyre, Johannesburg, 6.12.1922, NAM.

²² Harry Langworthy, *The Life of Joseph Booth*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996, p. 207. Joseph C. Chakanza, *Voices of Preachers in Protest*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1998.

²³ George Shepperson, Thomas Price, *Independent African*, Edinburgh: University Press, 1987, p. 412. Joseph C. Chakanza, *The Independent Alternative: A Historical Survey*, Zomba: Chancellor College, University of Malawi, 1981, p. 7.

The main characteristics, which are still valid for the CCACZ, are the “triune” baptism by immersion, robes and other colourful apparel, their distinctive “load and fire” way of preaching (see chapter 4), food taboos and rituals taken from the Old Testament like a purification ceremony for young mothers, and later, but not less strong, developments such as their stand for monogamy, the prominence of dancing and drumming in their services and the strict prohibition of any secular medical help, be it bio-medical or local diviners and healers.

Philipps’ statement about preaching the gospel was both their mandate and their method. Lack of finances did not allow for any



architectural extravaganza. Moreover, fancy things might distract from the spiritual field. And finally, Zionist spirituality demands a lot of space for its expression, since their faith is first and foremost danced. It is so much easier to do this at the *bwalo* (the communal gathering ground), and the Gospel, instead of being shut away behind church walls, can be heard by the whole village. For these reasons, we look in vain for typical or even adequate infrastructure among the denominations.

By 1940, Samuel Mbeta was still active in CCACZ leadership. He had moved to Blantyre where he pastored a small group that had grown to 57 adherents.²⁴ Genesis Mbedza continued to work quietly in the Ntcheu area, as the white resident there reported later to the provincial commissioner.²⁵ Quietly

²⁴ File, The Christian Apostolic Church in Zion, 9/1940, NAM, p. 9.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

has to be taken literally, too, for this original group of Malawian Zionists did not yet use drums in their services. Mbedza later left Malawi to live with his children in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. To my surprise, his relatives in Malawi informed me in 2005 that he was still alive. The picture shows Mbedza at the coffin of his wife Estere, nee Mtokoma, in 2003. He wears the regalia of a bishop in Zion. The white lab coat is often worn by Zionists during worship. Two of his grandsons support him. It goes without saying that the picture confirms his advanced age.

Around Ntcheu, other returning Ngoni *machona* started their congregations under the name of the CCACZ. Still well-known are the names Amos Chimasula, Samuele Kayange, Ezra Valilani and Haken Geka. Especially Chimasula is revered as the founder of Zion in some areas. He had applied in April 1937 at the District Commissioner in Ntcheu to start a branch of the CCACZ in his home village by the same name, Chimasula. The village is near Chirole, north of Ntcheu *boma*. He produced an ordination certificate signed by J. S. Maduna, Johannesburg, who called himself the “Chief Triumvir for the Transvaal.”²⁶ Chimasula had never heard of John George Phillips or Samuel Mbeta. The District Commissioner gave him permission to start a church.

There were similar independent groups like Chimasula’s. All of them enjoyed local autonomy, yet they belonged to the CCACZ. Prominent was Morris Anderson Gomani Chikuse, who, as the name says, came from the royal line of the *Inkhosi*, the paramount of the Ngoni.²⁷ The local church is known by the clan name, *aMgwagwa*, hence *Ziyoni ya Mgwagwa*. Morris, born in 1927, was the second child of Anderson, who was the son of the great chief Gomani Chikuse. Anderson, however, did not succeed his father as chief, his brother Phillip did. On the spiritual side, Morris grew up in the Zambezi Evangelical Church. His brother-in-law, Andiseni Thom, mediated his turn to Zionism. That man had gone to South Africa as a *mtchona* and joined the CCACZ there. After his return, he enlisted with the CCACZ in Ntcheu. One of his first converts was Morris, at that time

²⁶ Ibid., p. 5.

²⁷ Int. James Chinguluwe Phiri, Zagwazatha M’gwagwa Chikuse (younger brother to Morris), Tchona village, chief Nsamala, Balaka, 4.6.2008.

sixteen years old. He became so devoted to Zion that the people around Ntonda, Phalula, Machereza and Senzani nicknamed him *serious*. He was serious in his stand against any kind of medical intervention. Maybe the nickname was part of a compliment, too. For Morris was known to be very helpful to everyone, e.g. he readily assisted to transport peoples' goods on his ox-cart without charging for such services. In 1948 or 1949, Morris became the leader of the local class at his home, Govati village (next to Tchona), which later branched out to Matchereza and Senzani. He was a man given to dreams and visions. The congregations only sang lyrics which Morris had received by revelation. In addition, he was a capable instrument-maker.²⁸ Bugles were made from horns, drums from cowhide, and so the church indeed made its own music. One tenet, which Morris had taken over from the ZEC, formerly known as Zambezi Industrial Mission, was his insistence that members become self-sufficient by growing their own crops. He hated any kind of mendicity, this, too, might have earned him the middle name *Serious*. I have three independent reports which say that Morris Chikuse was murdered in his home on 29th March 2006, after a quarrel with herdsmen over cattle, which had destroyed the old man's garden. Since then, James Chinguluwe Phiri has been leading the church at Govati. See chapter 6 for the political implications of Chikuse's Zionism.

Lameck James Hara started a magnificent work among the Northern Ngoni in 1925, both in Malawi and Zambia, but this group broke away from the CCACZ in 1953 (see more under Zion Christian Prophecy Church [11]). Since that time, the CCACZ has not had a strong representation in the north among Mbelwa's Ngoni.

However, it was not all loss to the CCACZ in the 1950s. Fesitala Velemu, (pictured below with his wife Adilesi and their son) was born in 1905 at Pinimbala village, Chimutu, Lilongwe, about 15km north-east of

²⁸ Int. Moses A. Chimbetete with Jessie Chikuse (older sister to Morris), James Chinguluwe Phiri (current leader at Govati), Govati, 31.3.2006.

Lumbadzi trading centre.²⁹ The Velemus are original Ngoni from Mzimba district. In 1910, Fesitala started attending primary school at Kaphesi village, which was run by the DRC. Velemu's first two wives died during childbirth. He worked his fields for most of his life.



He started seeing visions in the early 1930s. In one of them, a voice told him, *“Fesitala, take your hoe with you, come and follow me, then I will tell you what to do.”* Fully conscious, he followed the voice to a barren place. There he was told to dig a deep hole, into which he symbolically placed his sins. He literally buried all his transgressions there.

The experience became a strong foundation for his Christian faith. He felt it was now time to attend a Christian church. He became a member of Ifa-ifa Christian Zion Church (4) at Nambuma,

Lilongwe. His ministry started to develop; he eventually became one of the pastors of the church. Some members of Ifa-ifa were not happy with their congregation's mode of baptism, which was sprinkling water on the forehead. Velemu, together with six other leaders, among them Joshua Kaphalanya and Natani Kawenga, seceded from Ifa-ifa in 1950 to start their own church, aptly called Jordan Zion ya Bata Church (5). The name was program; henceforth they happily immersed in their Jordan. Some

²⁹ Int. *Mlevi* Frackson Nickson Joseph Newa, Levi Charles Msampha, Levi Livison Chisamba (M'jomba), Binalison Newa (class secretary), Elisa Newa (prophetess), Joseph village, T/A Chimutu, Lilongwe, 14.5.2008.

years later, they heard that there is a church in Ntcheu, the CCACZ (1), which was using dance and music in their services. Velemu headed a delegation sent to Ntcheu. They met Samuel Kayange with their request to join their church with the CCACZ, so that they, too, might get *“the burning fire of dancing with musical instruments and drums.”*³⁰ In this way, a big part of the Jordan Ziyoni ya Bata church (5) merged with the CCACZ in the 1950s (Kawenga stayed on as leader of Jordan Ziyoni ya Bata). Kayange appointed Kaphalanya as General Overseer of the CCACZ in the central region, with Velemu as his deputy. After Kaphalanya's death, Velemu became the bishop over the central region in 1978. Through him, the CCACZ successfully branched out to Dowa, Ntchisi, Kasungu, Mchinji, Dedza and Salima. Because of its history, they refer to themselves as Malingaka Church, yet they are a part of the CCACZ.³¹ *Malingaka* simply refers to the way they worship (with drums); it is not a denomination's name. Velemu died on 18.1.1989, his wife Adilesi had passed away five years earlier. As the chart on the last page shows, the addition of Velemu's churches was a reverse trend. All other arrows point away from the CCACZ, only this one stands for a gain.

Most of those Ntcheu CCACZ groups united in 1964 to elect a national leadership, thus forming the largest body of Zion in Malawi under the name Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion. Samuel Kayange was elected as General Overseer. He passed away in 1996 and his successor became Bishop Loti (George Loti Mbekeyani), who still is in charge of the work during the time of writing, May 2010. Beside him works the overseer for the southern region, Bishop Chibisa of Chikhwawa and his counterpart in the north, Bishop Velemu (son of Festala Velemu).

The CCACZ is the oldest and still the largest Zion church in Malawi, much like a mother or a nest. The church has been vulnerable to splits

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Velemu never seceded from the CCACZ. Stansfield Kazokoko, “Malinkaka Church: A Case Study of an Independent Church which Seceded from the CCACZ”, Zomba: Chancellor College, Department of TRS, 1980, p. 3. Contrary to Kazokoko's paper, our informants further claimed that Velemu never went to South Africa, that the church does not allow polygamy or any involvement in Gule Wamkuru.

and sectarianism, more of that will be mentioned below. Almost half of all denominations in the country have come straight out of the CCACZ. The church's membership is estimated around 25,000 members. The people around Ntcheu sometimes refer to the CCACZ as 'our city.'

b. The Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3) – Bishop Wilson Mtokoma - 1925

Back in the 1920s, a storm was going to blast upon the CCACZ in South Africa, with profound side effects to the Malawian Zionists. Disunity on the side of the sending and supporting churches in Europe and America caused further confusion within African churches, a pattern we find repeatedly in this study. Strife and factionism within the US Zion movement were the ultimate cause for subsequent splits in South Africa and Malawi.

By 1923, Dowie's CCACZ in the USA had split into six different sections, each of them claiming to be the true heir of 'Apostle Elijah's' work.³² Most prominent among them was the group around Wilbur Voliva, yet even his leadership was disputed in U.S. courts.³³ All groups stayed in or around Zion City, Illinois. Phillips had initially accepted Voliva as his American leader, but after some time stopped to send the South African tithes and offerings to the USA. He could not understand how he was obliged to take money from his poor African fellows and transfer it to a rich church in America.³⁴ In turn, Phillips pledged his loyalty to another group of Illinois' Zionists, with Francis M. Royall as their leader. The same year, 1923, Voliva sent a new representative to South Africa, Van Buren Shumaker.³⁵ He was born in 1866 at Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA. In his youth he worked as a locomotive fireman. He joined the CCACZ in 1899, moved to Zion

³² Gordon P. Gardiner, *Out of Zion into all the Word*, Shippensburg, PA, Companion Press, 1990.

³³ Letter from Van Buren Shumaker to the American Consul C.N.P. Cross, Johannesburg, 16.7.1924, NAM.

³⁴ Letter from John G. Phillips, CCACZ, to the Native Commissioner, Johannesburg, 27.8.1923. NaoSA, File NTS, 1457, 154/214, Part 1.

³⁵ Wilbur G. Voliva, ed., "Autobiographical Sketch of Elder Van Buren Shumaker", *Leaves of Healing*, vol. 54, no.6, p. 122, Zion, Illinois, 26.4.1924.

years later and became an elder under Voliva.³⁶ Shumaker was somebody who would never come to mind for a particular job by virtue of his gifting, but once chosen, would be quite dependable. The white missionary arrived in Johannesburg in January 1924 and found a Malawian on his chair! Royall had warned Phillips of the impending danger that Shumaker's arrival in South Africa would pose to their work:

Voliva has sent Shumaker to South Africa. He is a very ignorant man, and may deceive some... This man Shumaker will do much harm. Just keep the people away from him and pay no attention to what he says.³⁷

Royall assured Phillips in the same letter that his group was the true offspring of Dowie's Zionism. Shumaker was not interested in sharing the leadership with Phillips, yet many CCACZ members preferred Phillips and started to gather separately. Shumaker tried his uttermost to bring Phillips into bad reputation and even wrote a letter to the Minister of the Interior to have the Malawian stripped of certain privileges.³⁸ Phillips had, for example, received concessions from the South African Railway department, entitling him to travel on lower fares as a minister. All black churches in South Africa strove for such government recognition. This would allow their ministers to buy cheaper railway tickets, officiate at marriages and obtain communion wine.³⁹ However, for decades the government kept the carrot of recognition dangling over almost all black churches. Not even two dozen out of thousands of applying churches received official recognition. We have then, in the year 1924, two churches under the same name CCACZ in South Africa. One is lead by a Malawian, J.G. Phillips, with support from F.M. Royall in the USA, the

³⁶ Provincial Commissioner, Central Province, Christian Catholic Church in Zion, CID 1/3/23, Lilongwe, 11.11.1924, NAM.

³⁷ Letter from Francis M. Royall, Zion City, Ill., to J.G.Phillips, Johannesburg, 29.11.1923. NaoSA, File NTS, 1457, 154/214, Part 1.

³⁸ Letter from Van Buren Shumaker to the Minister of the Interior, Pretoria, 29.11.1924. NaoSA, File NTS, 1457, 154/214, Part 1.

³⁹ Int. Steve Hayes, Pretoria, 13.12.2004.

other church is led by a white missionary, V.B. Shumaker, who is backed by W.G. Voliva, also from Illinois.⁴⁰

Unfortunately, Phillips' position inside the church was not so strong any longer that he could defend himself against these assaults from the outside. Already in November 1923, before Shumaker's arrival, members had begun to quarrel against Phillips, accusing him of knife-stabbing and immoral conduct.⁴¹ Phillips then left the church. He went to Mozambique, possibly home to Malawi, too, to strengthen the groups around Mbedza. At that time he still used the name of the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion on his banner.⁴² About a year later, he returned to South Africa, reaffirmed his cooperation with Royall and together they started the "Holy Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion." Phillips gave different versions concerning the birth date of the church; spiritually he was of course correct to date it back as early as 1902, or 1915, when Royall and Voliva went separate ways in the US. However, the name "Holy Apostolic Church in Zion" with Phillips as its undisputed leader appears first in 1925. 1400 CCACZ members in South Africa went with Phillips.⁴³ He was in good standing with the white administration and the prerogatives of cheaper railway travel and officiating at marriages were transferred to the new church within the year of its founding, although it was never fully recognized by the government. Yet, as already pointed out, this favourable treatment was very unusual for a 'native' at that time.⁴⁴ The church quickly reached Swaziland, too.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Letter from the Director of Native Labor to the Secretary for Native Affairs, Pretoria, 14.10.1924. NaoSA, File NTS, 1457, 154/214, Part 1.

⁴¹ Letter from J.M. Mwelass, CCACZ, Johannesburg, to the Secretary of Native Affairs, Pretoria, 8.11.1923. NaoSA, File NTS, 1457, 154/214, Part 1.

⁴² Letter from Van Buren Shumaker to the American Consul C. N. P. Cross, Johannesburg, 16.7.1924, NAM.

⁴³ Letter from the Director of Native Labour to the Secretary for Native Affairs, Pretoria, 3.9.1925. NaoSA, File NTS, 1457, 154/214, Part 1.

⁴⁴ Letter from W.W. Hoy, General Manager of South African Railways & Harbours, to J.G. Phillips, Johannesburg, 18.8.1925. NaoSA, File NTS, 1457, 154/214, Part 1.

⁴⁵ Bengt Sundkler, *Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists*, London: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 213.

The new-found freedom helped Phillips to become theologically more independent. In the following years, he would mold the church along the pattern of his own African, Anglican, Pentecostal and Zionist heritage. He wrote in 1926 that the church, although its founder was J. A. Dowie, does not believe him to have been “Elijah the Prophet.”⁴⁶ The church also adopted classic Pentecostal teaching on the baptism in the Holy Spirit, including speaking in tongues as initial evidence, something unusual for Zionists.⁴⁷ It is likely that Phillips had the experience while in contact with John G. Lake. Once on his own, he faced no resistance to include this very Pentecostal tenet in the life and even in the constitution of the new church. Francis Royall ministered in South Africa alongside Phillips for some time. He later left for missionary work in Jerusalem, then under British administration. Phillips was left solely in charge of the church.

Phillips organized the church into districts. They did not open schools, except one in Botswana, but organized evening classes for all converts to learn the three ‘Rs’. He was more generous with the church’s financial administration than his American counterparts in the CCACZ. All ministers had to live from the tithe and offerings gathered in their districts, from this tithe ten percent went to the headquarters in Johannesburg.⁴⁸ John George Phillips passed away on the 20th July 1934. He had served as overseer of the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion until that day. He was a highly educated man by the standards of his time and his church in South Africa honours him as their founder until this day. The spiritual child of Anglican missionaries in Malawi, he nevertheless added to and developed his own theology. The most important tenet was his belief in physical healing. Phillips was a ‘mission child.’ He was brought up with the Anglican teaching that saw modern scientific medicine as the only way of

⁴⁶ John G. Phillips, Form of Application by Native Churches or Religious Bodies for Sites or other Privileges Depending upon Government Recognition, Holy Apostolic Church in Zion, Johannesburg, 12.4.1926. NaoSA, File NTS, 1457, 154/214, Part 1.

⁴⁷ Conference of the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion, *Constitution and Bye-Laws*, Daggakraal, 26.3.1937, Article 14, p. 4.

⁴⁸ John G. Phillips, Form of Application by Native Churches or Religious Bodies for Sites or other Privileges Depending upon Government Recognition, Holy Apostolic Church in Zion, Johannesburg, 12.4.1926. NaoSA, File NTS, 1457, 154/214, Part 1.

Christian healing, thus to avert any magical view of Christianity.⁴⁹ Yet, because of his own illness and theological quest, he came to believe in Christ the Healer. Phillips is the distant originator of the two biggest Zionist denominations in this country, the CCACZ and the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3), to whose initial stages in Malawi we now turn.

One day in Johannesburg, Phillips met Wilson Lazaro Mtokoma, a fellow Malawian who was born around 1890 at Moloko, Blantyre. He had left his home country in 1918 for the gold mines of South Africa. Mtokoma changed work in Johannesburg when he found employment as a cook. He became a Zionist in Johannesburg and, with the blessings of Phillips, returned to Malawi in 1925. He settled in Naperi, Blantyre, worked at the Wilson Estate and founded a prayer group called “The Holy Apostolic Church in Zion.”⁵⁰ Trouble arose one day when Mtokoma refused that his daughter be vaccinated against measles, which led the colonial district officer in charge to send him straight away to prison. It took a letter from Bishop Maseko in South Africa to explain the church’s stand on medical treatment to restore Mtokoma’s liberty.⁵¹ After this incident, they even allowed him to go to hospitals and lay hands on the sick! The group experienced steady growth until this day with classes in Blantyre (Mbayani and Ndirande), Mulanje, Chiradzulo, Thyolo, Balaka, Mwanza, Nsanje and Ntcheu. Mtokoma’s beautiful daughters, Estere and Feresi, made their mark on Zionism in Malawi, too. Estere married Genesis Mbedza and thus links the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion with the CCACZ. Feresi married Foster Chaluluka, who later became the bishop of the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion. Mtokoma carried Zion to Malawi, but he never absorbed Phillip’s Pentecostal tenets. The church in South Africa does know and practice glossolalia; the Malawian followers had trouble first of all to understand the question and subject I was posing to them –

⁴⁹ Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness*, Stanford: University Press, 1991, p. 73.

⁵⁰ Int. with the leaders of the HACZ, Bishop F.B. Chaluluka, Mrs. Chaluluka, General Mlevi L.N. Nkhoma, L. Mbewe, A.F. Sagona Chisale, Whwayo, 14.6.2003.

⁵¹ Int. with the leaders of the HACZ, Bishop F.B. Chaluluka, Mrs. Chaluluka, General Mlevi L.N. Nkhoma, L. Mbewe, A. F. Sagona Chisale, Whwayo, 14.6.2003.

speaking in tongues is unknown to them. Mtokoma passed away in 1947. Before that headquarters were moved to Whawayo village, chief Kapeni, northwest of Lunzu market. It is a very rural setting and one can say that Zion has grown into a village there. *Mlevi* C.D.C. Denjezani led the church for five years from 1947 – 1952. (*Mlevi* or *Levi* is the title for a class leader, similar to a local pastor, in Malawian Zionism). *Mlevi* D.W. Dzonzi took over after him, although only as ‘acting bishop.’

It was during Dzonzi’s tenure that the identity of the church became more



pronounced. As stated, there was a unification of different Zionist groups in Ntcheu in 1964 under the CCACZ banner. Up to that time, there had been spiritual and marital links between the HACZ (3) and the CCACZ, but in 1968 it was made clear that the HACZ is a church on its own.⁵² Chakanza speaks of a “schism” within the CCACZ, but the developments and leadership personalities had preceded the final break for a long time. It may well be that the sheer distance between Whawayo and Ntcheu meant that the center could not hold

sway over its periphery. Yet one cannot find doctrinal differences between the two denominations. After Dzonzi’s death, elderly and gentleman-like Bishop Chaluluka led the church (in the picture at Whawayo in 2003). As already told, he was the son-in-law of the late founder Mtokoma. He and his wife Feresi were already octogenarians, but displayed an amazing fitness when joining the church in worship,

⁵² Joseph C. Chakanza, “An Annotated List of African Instituted Church 1900 – 1981”, Zomba: *Sources for the Study of Religion in Malawi*, no. 10, 1983, church no. 52.

running around in circles at full speed, as I witnessed during my first visit to them in May 2003. Chaluluka passed away on 23rd January 2005 and was buried a day later. The succession is unclear at the time of writing, for even A. F. Sagona, junior bishop under Chaluluka, went to be with his Lord in January 2005.

c. *The Zion Church (2) – Ziyoni ya Bata – Simon Mlungamanja, John W. N. Dingiswayo, Bishop Enos Numeri Ng'ombe – 1923*

We turn back to 1924 in South Africa, where Shumaker had meanwhile busied himself writing letters stating that he is the only representative of the “original” CCACZ. He called Phillips an ‘impostor’ and literally wrote him off. Shumaker tried to limit the split’s damage as much as he could. For Malawi, he feared that the house, which he had not yet built, was already burning. It became clear to him that he had to trace Phillip’s *machona* missionaries and win their adherents back to the original flock. For Malawi, he soon found a man capable for such a task.

John Wesley Newton Dingiswayo Ranya, born in 1878, is certainly the most controversial figure in the history of Malawian Zionism. A Ngoni by tribe, coming from the martial Dingiswayo clan,⁵³ he wandered tirelessly through southern Africa most of his life.⁵⁴ He could use his manifold backgrounds to produce different identities, which came in handy from time to time but in general made him look like a crook. He gave three different versions about his birthplace, e.g. at Mzulu, T/A Nazonda, Nyasaland;⁵⁵ Tanganyika⁵⁶ and Natal.⁵⁷ He was interrogated by the colonial police in Malawi in 1924 and managed to prove his nationality,

⁵³ Desmond D. Phiri, *From Nguni to Ngoni*, Limbe: Popular Publications, 1982, pp. 17f. Donald R. Morris, *The Washing of the Spears. The Rise and Fall of the Zulu Nation*, London: Pimlico, 1994, p. 41.

⁵⁴ John Parrett, “Religious Independency in Nyasaland,” in: *African Studies*, Quarterly Journal, Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University, vol. 38, no. 2, 1979, pp. 191ff.

⁵⁵ Chief Commissioner of Police, Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion, 13.11.1924, n. d. NAM.

⁵⁶ Description of a Native Immigrant, John Wesley Dingiswayo, n. d. NAM.

⁵⁷ File, The Christian Apostolic Church in Zion, 9/1940, NAM, p. 7.

which at least meant that he spoke Chinyanja fluently.⁵⁸ In his childhood and youth he was educated by the SDA in Thyolo and thereafter started working as a clerk for a German company in Mozambique. He is reported to have worked in Tanzania, too; found employment at a post office in Harare, Zimbabwe and by 1918 made his first contacts with Pentecostal missions in Gatooma, where he was soon promoted to preacher. Around 1920, he met a fellow Malawian and *mtchona*, Simon Mlungamanja from Ngolomi village, Salima. Mlungamanja became converted through Dingiswayo's preaching. The two men were to meet again some years later. Dingiswayo left Zimbabwe for South Africa in 1922. There he joined the CCACZ, led by John George Phillips at that time. He once referred to Phillips as his leader, but forsook him and sided with Shumaker in the leadership dispute.⁵⁹ Anyhow, Dingiswayo was sent by Shumaker and arrived in the country of his birth on the 4th August 1924. He was appointed as 'General Conductor' for the Zion gatherings at Mchinji and the proximity to Zambia certainly aimed at mission work into that country, too.⁶⁰ Dingiswayo announced himself to the authorities at Mchinji on the 2nd December the same year, produced a letter from Shumaker and some issues of "Leaves of Healing." Apparently, the government did not know anything about the CCACZ. The absence of any visible means of support raised questions with the immigration officers, who sent him in the shelter of a 'Native Constable' to the Provincial Commissioner in Lilongwe.⁶¹ Issued too, was the strict prohibition to preach on the way. Dingiswayo was allowed to stay in the country, but propagation was forbidden. Money did not flow abundantly from the South African headquarters and with the freedom for public ministry restricted, the man had to look for secular employment. In 1926, he received permission to trade at his new home Mazonda village, Ntcheu,

⁵⁸ File, The Christian Apostolic Church in Zion, 9/1940, NAM, p. 5.

⁵⁹ Letter from the H.J. Taylor, Chief Native Commissioner, Pretoria, to the Chief Native Commissioner in Salisbury, 22.11.1922. NaoSA, file no. N.2714/22/6602/6681.

⁶⁰ Van Buren Shumaker, *Certificate for J. Wesley Dingiswayo*, Johannesburg: General Headquarters of the C.C.A.Church in Zion, 4.8.1924, NAM.

⁶¹ P. Marker, Immigration – Natives, Fort Manning, 2.12.1924, NAM.

all the time under the watchful eye of the white resident “to prevent him from preaching.”⁶² Trading, however, helped him to spread out and in 1927 he had gathered eight families in Chagunda village, near Lilongwe. Numbers rose to 40 adherents in Lilongwe by 1932 and eight years later there were 271 Zionists loyal to Dingiswayo.

By 1931 there were two groups under the name of the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion in Malawi. Dingiswayo’s group became more and more established in Ntcheu and Lilongwe; Samuel Mbeta’s church spread in the south around Blantyre. The influx of returning *machona* strengthened the groups *not* affiliated with Dingiswayo, for two reasons: First, Dingiswayo’s denomination did not sanction drums. Secondly, his personal authoritarian leadership style and the connection to the white overseer in South Africa stood in contrast to the other CCACZ groups. Many *machona* considered themselves as pioneers, founders and bishops. They were reluctant to have anybody senior above them.

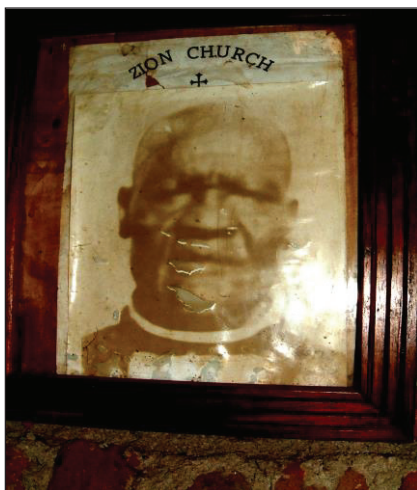
In spite of the growth recorded above, Dingiswayo’s group was becoming a minority around 1930 within the conglomeration under the CCACZ banner. He never approved drums and thus the distinction between the groups became audibly more pronounced. Still, he felt it was his task to gather the disloyalists under his umbrella. In 1932, he invited Samuel Mbeta to Lilongwe and called for a duel. With what do Zionists fight each other? They use (their) curative powers. Mbeta claimed that he had proved his calling by an actual healing happening in Lilongwe, but that Dingiswayo had punched above his weight and had lost the duel, if we follow Mbeta’s own narration of events, which he joyfully reported to the Blantyre District Commissioner.⁶³ There is no statement from Dingiswayo’s side, but it becomes clear that this confrontation deepened the rift between the two groups.

A more positive development took place in Salima. Simon Mlungamanja, who had been converted to Zion through Dingiswayo in Zimbabwe, returned in 1923 to his home village Ngolomi. He established a church there and as early as 1924 Dingiswayo came to visit

⁶² File, The Christian Apostolic Church in Zion, 9/1940, NAM, p. 5.

⁶³ File, The Christian Apostolic Church in Zion, 9/1940, NAM, p. 4.

Mlungamanja and helped with the local ministry.⁶⁴ More or less born into Zion in 1928 was Mlungamanja's nephew, Enosi Numeri Ng'ombe. The Zion Church (*ya bata*) traces its origins back to Mlungamanja's pioneering days in 1923, while it was officially still called CCACZ. There are, however, good grounds to follow the church's own reasoning. First, the



congregation was close to the present national headquarters near Salima. Secondly, the most influential leader of The Zion Church, Ng'ombe, was Mlungamanja's nephew and, most significant, the denomination's hallmark, the absence of drums, was already emphasized in the 1920s, by Mlungamanja and Dingiswayo.

Trouble happened in 1932 when 12 of Dingiswayo's followers from Lilongwe refused to be vaccinated.

Their refusal even kept the District Commissioner busy. It is not clear who won the case, but three years later Dingiswayo was again in deep waters. He had earlier ordained a certain Petro Huva, originally from Mozambique. This man went off into an extreme version of millennialism, claiming that "Jesus Christ will come back on 28th September and Lucifer day will be on 28th of October [1934]."⁶⁵ Such strong statements are not characteristic for Zionism and they embarrassed Dingiswayo. Moreover, millennialism made the authorities nervous and Dingiswayo did his uttermost to persuade the government that he had cut all ties to Huva. The prophet somehow got lost in the wide savanna of Mozambique, but this time the government had it with Dingiswayo. It was suggested that he be returned to South Africa, but Shumaker refused to recall him and the

⁶⁴ Int. M.G.P. Mlauzi, H.E.N. Mbewe, J.J.M. Chisale, *The Zion Church* (2), Salima, 22.1.2003.

⁶⁵ File, *The Christian Apostolic Church in Zion*, 9/1940, NAM, p. 4.

government on its own did not want to take the trouble to deport him. Some years of calm followed. In 1939, Dingiswayo again caused a stir among the settlers in Chiradzulo and one year later he moved to Mulanje, Misomali village, T/A Nkanda. He attracted crowds by the proclamation of healing, but this in turn brought the attention of colonial authorities. Sometimes he would alarm them by claiming to be John Chilembwe the Second, then he took sides with them and reassured the District Commissioner that he and his followers had prayed for a British victory over Hitler. Dingiswayo (his image taken from a frame suspended above the altar at Zion ya bata [2], Salima) established a healing home in Mulanje in good old Zionist tradition. The house was, of course, African in style, but it operated with the same spiritual principles as described under Dowie's ministry. With him worked a prophetess, Mayi Eliza Botoman. Another co-worker was Steven Tembwe, originally from Lilongwe. This man Dingiswayo ordained to be his successor. John Wesley Newton Dingiswayo Ranya passed away on 17th August 1953. He was buried at Mchoma, Namulenga, Mulanje.⁶⁶ Steven Tembwe's tenure in office was much more peaceful and he left far fewer enemies in his wake if compared to his predecessor. Tembwe is buried beside Dingiswayo in Mulanje.

The mantle of national leadership then fell onto Enosi Numeri Ng'ombe (1928-2001) from the Salima branch of the church. Ng'ombe was a remarkable man and his achievements are many. Under him, the *Zion ya bata* became the most unified and organized Zionist denomination in the country; more about this in chapter 5 under 'settlements.' After Ng'ombe passed away in 2001, the church felt that there could not be another national leader in his footsteps, so they divided his office into three positions for the northern, central and southern regions of Malawi. The overseer for every region is called *inspector*. M. G. P. Mlauzi succeeded Ng'ombe as the inspector with his seat at Mount Zion. Mlauzi died on 23rd January 2003. The succession is not clear at the time of writing. The church abhors elections as something

⁶⁶ Int. M.G.P. Mlauzi, H.E.N. Mbewe, J.J.M. Chisale, The Zion Church (2), Salima, 22.1.2003.

evil. Leadership, they say, is the ‘inheritance of a double portion,’ meaning that the Lord gives a special anointing to a leader which the church should then be able to recognize. The church’s baptized member roll in Malawi and Mozambique stood little over 20,000 in 2003.

d. Ifa-ifa Zion Christian Church (4) – Adiyele Katsichi – 1930

This church seems like an anachronism, for its historical and dogmatic features present an interesting blend between Reformed Christianity and Zionism. Neither does it fit into the *machona* pattern. Ifa-ifa has long ago severed the ties to their mother church, yet they retained some of her characteristics.

The founder, Adiyele Katsichi, was born in 1902 in Nkhotakota.⁶⁷ Since childhood he had been a member of the Dutch Reformed Church, Nkhoma Synod. Katsichi was already exercising lay-leadership in his early 20s at the local DRC church in Dzenza, Lilongwe. He and a group of people (Wikilifi Chimawo, Yeremiya Chingalande, Labani Cheza and Natani Kawenga) went to some special ‘revival’ meetings, within the DRC, which were held at M’gundadzuwa in Dedza district, in July 1930 (the village lies about 25km northwest of Dedza). The meetings centered on the ministry of a certain Mr. Fanueli. He had received his own Pentecost earlier and was now busy with an itinerant healing ministry in the central region of Malawi. Fanueli provided the initial spark, but he did not take part in starting and organizing the church. Katsichi later referred to him as “*an angel of the Lord.*”⁶⁸

It is doubtful whether the DRC would have called for ‘revival’ meetings. Fact is that such meetings did take place at that time in the Reformed churches.⁶⁹ Charismatic impulses came from the leading DRC missionary, A. C. Murray, who was the nephew of Andrew Murray, leader

⁶⁷ Int. Harod Kanyamphula, Chenjerani Laison, Lumbadzi trading centre and Mkwinda village, Kayembe, Dowa, 28., 29.5.2008.

⁶⁸ Wikilifi Chimalo, *Chiyambi cha Mpingo wa Zion m’Chaka cha 1930*, Lilongwe: Likuni Press, 1979, p. 12.

⁶⁹ Ulf Strohhorn, “Pentecostalic Approaches and Manifestations in Early Malawian Church History”, Postgraduate Colloquium, University of Malawi, Department of TRS, 1999.

of the DRC in South Africa. Andrew Murray had written a book called, *The Full Blessing of Pentecost*.⁷⁰ Moreover, he brought the pre-pentecostalic influence of the Keswick conventions to this continent. Influential were female missionaries, too, many of whom had been brought up in the Holiness tradition at Mount Holyoke Seminary in Hadley, Massachusetts.⁷¹

To Katsichi and friends, the events at M'gundadzuwa spelled Pentecost. They were, according to their own report, filled with the Holy Spirit and started speaking in tongues on 16th June 1930.⁷² Physical healings were experienced at M'gundadzuwa and these phenomena continued when they travelled home. Their report reads like a 'Malawian chapter of Acts'

After he had arrived at the village [M'gundadzuwa], Fanueli asked the chief whether he would allow inviting all the sick so that they may meet him. The chief heard the request and had the message brought to the sick. They all came, Fanueli prayed over them, and all of them were healed on the spot. The report of these healings travelled far to the surrounding villages. Fanueli then left and made his way to Chimutu village, in Lilongwe district. Many sick people were found in this village. Fanueli prayed for them and all of them were healed. These news came to the ears of Mr. Numeli Tsoka, Mr. Furedi and Mr. Filipo, who were resident at Tsoka village. They left their home and went to Chimutu, to receive healing, too. After they had found him, Fanueli prayed over them and they were healed immediately. They went back home in full health. The next morning Fanueli went to Tsoka village, and stayed the night. While sleeping at night, he heard someone else being stirred by the Spirit. It

⁷⁰ Andrew Murray, *The Full Blessing of Pentecost*, London: James Nisbeth, 1908.

⁷¹ Ulf Strohhorn, "Pentecostalic Approaches and Manifestations in Early Malawian Church History", Postgraduate Colloquium, University of Malawi, Department of TRS, 1999, p. 4.

⁷² Wikilifi Chimalo, *Chiyambi cha Mpingo wa Zion m'Chaka cha 1930*, Lilongwe: Likuni Press, 1979.

was a woman called Lute, and she was stirred by the Holy Spirit who entered her. She became the first woman to receive the Spirit in this family.⁷³

By August 1930, the local DRC congregation at Dzenza was split over the issue. Influential local elders believed in the supernatural manifestations, too. They were Mumba Julubeke Tekateka, Simion Tambala, Mizeke Chikudzu and Mr. Kambubvu from Chinkhota village, all CCAP members. Chikudzu functioned as the local pastor, Katsichi was an elder. At first, they were reprimanded by their local missionary. Attempts were made by either side, missionaries and Malawian leaders, to reconcile the group within the CCAP (see chapter 6 for the full story). The final break, however, came on the 15th May 1932. On that day, Katsichi noted meticulously, he started to baptize people.⁷⁴ He is to be regarded as the main founder of the church, since Chikudzu passed away within a year of the church's founding.⁷⁵

Over the years, the church's nickname, *Ifa-ifa*, came to be the official designation for this denomination. *Ifa* is the Chichewa imperative voice for "to die." Katsichi would command the 'spirit of sickness' to die when praying over the sick. This was followed by another command, "Dzuka, dzuka!", meaning, "rise up, rise up!" (to a new life). The current leaders claim that the founding fathers of *Ifa-ifa* had had no contact with any of the other Zionist groups in the country. Such a statement is heard oftentimes as an attempt to vouch for the 'purity' of their religion, as if it fell straight from heaven. Nonetheless, the close proximity to Ntcheu and Salima makes some contacts probable; even more so the Christian name of Mr. Tsoka, Numeli. The names of the Pentateuch's books are favorites among Zionists. Later contacts with Ng'ombe's church (2) at Salima have been confirmed.⁷⁶

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp.3f.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁷⁵ Int. Daniel Sitima, Harod Kanyamphula, M'gubo village., Mkukula, Dowa, 6.10.2008.

⁷⁶ Int. Bishop Mateyu Natani Kawenga, Jordan Ziyoni ya bata, Nguluyanawambe hill, 7.10.2008.

Katsichi himself was of Chewa ethnic origin. The Ifa-ifa church had made good gains in Chewa and DRC territory, with local classes established in Lilongwe, Mchinji, Dowa, Kasungu and Ntchisi districts. Headquarters were erected at Mphako, near Nambuma trading centre in Lilongwe. It would, however be speculative to ascribe the differences between this church and her Ngoni sisters to the variations which can be found between Ngoni and Chewa cultures. What is evident is the differing church background; the tradition from the Dutch Reformed Church, to which Ifa-ifa has held on to. They baptize by sprinkling water on the infant's forehead, just as in the DRC. Their robes are plain white, no drumming can be heard and no dancing will take place in their services. Lyrics are taken from the hymnbook *Nyimbo za Mulungu*, which some call *Nyimbo za Nkhoma* (DRC). However, they are sung to Zionist tunes only. All in all, the church is clearly more of the Zionist than of the Reformed tradition. They officially refrain from all types of medicine; dietary laws are followed. They have prophets, a lively belief in angels and an inclination towards dreams and visions.

Katsichi passed away on 14th November 1973. His deputy, Foster Phewa, took over the helm. His turn to depart from this world came in 1980 and Bishop Yosefe became the new national leader. They call him *Mdindo*, (the one in responsibility), one of the rare Chichewa titles used in Zionism. He is by now rather fragile and totally blind, so that he cannot see to his duties effectively. Membership is declining. By now, the church has 2800 baptized members, who are supervised by 14 pastors.⁷⁷

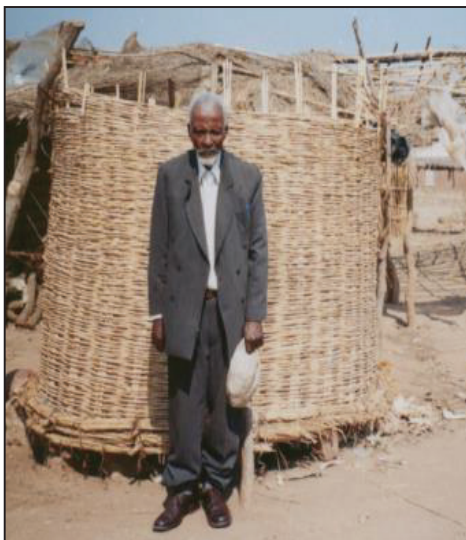
e. Jordan Ziyoni ya Bata Church (5) (Holy Bethlehem Zion Church)– Julubeki Tekateka and Natani Kawenga - 1941

The Ifa-ifa Ziyoni ya bata church suffered one devastating schism during its course. Already in 1941, the Jordan Ziyoni ya Bata church came out of it.⁷⁸ As the name says, the issue at that time was the mode of baptism. Mumba Julubeki Tekateka, Natani Kawenga and Fesitala Velema argued with their leader, Katsichi, for the church to adopt the Zionist way of

⁷⁷ Int. Daniel Sitima, Harod Kanyamphula, M'gubo vlg., Mkukula, Dowa, 6.10.2008.

⁷⁸ Int. *Mlevi Sentisimenti Diyele*, Jordan Ziyoni ya bata, Lumbadzi, 27.5.2008.

immersing their neophytes in a river. Julubeki might have changed his theology to immersion when he worked as a missionary of the church in Harare.⁷⁹ Alas, the bishop did not relent.⁸⁰ Almost half of Ifa-ifa's followers then left Katsichi and, by doing so, turned to Zionism all the more. Changed was not just the baptism by immersion, soon the believers donned colourful dresses and headgear. They wave banners around which are supposed to have healing and protective powers. Swinging their flags 'cleanses the air', they say. The use of secular medicine is forbidden. Participants in the early years used to dance in the services, yet without the accompaniment of drums.



Leadership succession is dynastic in the church. Julubeki left after a few years due to moral misconduct and Mateyu Kawenga, (pictured here in September 2000 at Dzoole village) took over the helm.⁸¹ He hastened the church to be registered with the new Malawi government in 1966. This took place under the name of *Holy Bethlehem Zion Church*, a name, which is as much in use for one and the same denomination as is Jordan Ziyoni ya bata. Natani

was born in 1903 at Chinoko village, Chimutu, Lilongwe and died in 1999 at the same place. His son Mateyu, born in 1927, took over then. He is by now very advanced in age and has yielded the church's headship to his

⁷⁹ Wikilifi Chimalo, *Chiyambi cha Mpingo wa Zion m'Chaka cha 1930*, Lilongwe: Likuni Press, 1979, p. 4.

⁸⁰ Int. Harod Kanyamphula, Chenjerani Laison, Lumbadzi trading centre and Mkwinda village, Kayembe, Dowa, 28., 29.5.2008.

⁸¹ Int. Bishop Mateyu Kawenga, Nguluyanawambe, 7.10.2008.

son Flywell M. N. Kawenga, born in 1951. The son, if he doesn't help his father run the church, earns his living from a transport business located at Area 12, Lilongwe. Headquarters are close to Nguluyanawambe, Kasungu, late President H. K. Banda's residence. The church, like its mother, is predominantly of Chewa stock. It has 17 classes in four districts in the central region, Kasungu, Lilongwe, Mchinji and Dowa. In Dowa, however, most members trace their roots to the Ngoni of Mzimba. Altogether, 3000 souls count themselves to Jordan Ziyoni ya bata in Malawi.

f. Zion ya Kang'oma (6) – late 1940s'

While the Jordan Zion church split from Ifa-ifa on grounds of baptism, there was yet another motive to leave the church under Katsichi. One class left the bishop because they felt he was being self-centred and not willing to listen to their opinion.⁸² The "Zion of the small drum", so the meaning of its name, is not named after their mode of drumming, but after the local brook at Kasiya, Lilongwe west, where they established the church already in the 1940s. For some time, this group of believers joined the Jordan Zion ya Bata Church (5), but some years later they opted to become independent. To them, the Jordan church had gone too far into Zionism. Kang'oma has retained more elements from their Reformed heritage. They baptise infants by sprinkling; they do not wear colourful robes and, in spite of their name's misinterpretation, have chosen to remain ya bata.⁸³ Yet they vouch for faith healing only; any visit to a traditional healer or biomedical clinic is forbidden. Like the mother church Ifa-ifa, Kang'oma has more of a Chewa than Ngoni background. The current leader is Bishop Ntema. The denomination has seven local congregations and close to 1500 members in the central region of Malawi.

In 1979, Wikilifi Chimawo, at that time the bishop of the church, published a booklet called *Chiyambi cha Mpingo wa Zion m'Chaka cha*

⁸² Int. Bishop Mtema, Kasiya, 8.10.2008.

⁸³ Joseph C. Chakanza, *An Annotated List of African Instituted Church 1900 – 1981*, Zomba: Sources for the Study of Religion in Malawi, no. 10, 1983, church no. 134.

1930 (The Beginning of the Zion Church in the Year 1930).⁸⁴ It is, to the best of my knowledge, the only written publication authored by a Malawian Zionist. Chimawo had access to Katsichi's apostolic narrative and traces Kang'oma's origin to Ifa-ifa.

g. Characteristics and the First Bone of Contention: Drumming

Most of the knowledge these poor people have
of anything bearing on religion
is couched in poetical couplets
and I long to see some good Christian poet arise
who can represent Christian voice in song.
Few things under God would carry the gospel wider and fix it deeper.
Thomas Valpy French⁸⁵

Three churches, the Christian Catholic Church in Zion, the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion and the Ziyoni ya Bata form the core of historical Zionism in Malawi (The Ifa-ifa Zion Church [4] and daughters belong chronologically to this generation, however, their origins and membership numbers differ significantly from the *machona* denominations).

The strength of the first three churches was that they could incorporate different *machona* groups with their distinctive regional colouring and that they bore the tension of varying theological pressures. Six denominations is a fairly small figure for the founding generation of such a movement, especially when viewed over a period of thirty years. This bond of unity becomes even stronger when compared to the fissiparous tendencies in mission-controlled churches (e.g. the Presbyterian synods), where 'Ethiopianism' was the main reason for breakaways⁸⁶ or Pentecostal churches, where the influx of missionary

⁸⁴ Wikilifi Chimalo, *Chiyambi cha Mpingo wa Zion m'Chaka cha 1930*, Lilongwe: Likuni Press, 1979.

⁸⁵ V. Stacey, "Thomas Valpy French, 1825 - 1891, Intrepid Adventurer for Christ among Muslims," G. Anderson, ed., *Mission Legacies, Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994, p. 280.

⁸⁶ Kenneth R. Ross, ed., *Christianity in Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere, 1996, pp. 129-178. Chapter 15 contains the by now famous text of Yesaya Zerenji Mwasi, "Essential and Paramount Reasons for Working Independently," which is published by Kachere separately, too.

personnel has created an ever widening array of denominations since the 1940s. Moreover, the lines between these different Zionist denominations were not that clearly drawn until the 1960s. It is not possible to establish a watertight division between them during the first decades. Their differences have evolved over time and still today, they have a sense of unity in their dealings with each other, which shows a common denominator. In contrast to research interpretations from South Africa, the particular structure of an ethnic group (Ngoni, in our case), does *not* favour secession from the mother church.⁸⁷ On the contrary, potential causes for divisions, which already reared their head during this generation, were held in check by a common ethnic origin.

Malawian Zionism was not a satellite of South African headquarters. There never was a period of close initial dependency on distant headquarters. *Machona* travels were highly irregular, communication was cumbersome and there was little hope in South Africa to extract any financial levies from a Malawian franchise. Yet there was contact and even theological debate within the wider Zionist movements in the region. For example, on 12th March 1953, many Zionist leaders gathered in Cape Town. High on the agenda was the monogamy-polygamy debate. It is not known if a Malawian delegate travelled to Cape Town. The resolution, however, was well known in Malawi and was carried out in the churches;⁸⁸ see chapter 6 for more details.

Almost all founding fathers and mothers of the church were Ngoni, most pioneers were returning *machona*. Not all founding fathers had an ecclesiastical career or such theological creativity as J. G. Phillips. Most of them regarded the churches, to which they had belonged before coming to Zion, as religious institutions without real life from God. The *machona* period and total conversion experience formed a psychological and

John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875 – 1940*, Zomba: Kachere, 2000, pp. 227-264.

⁸⁷ Dawid Venter, ed., *Engaging Modernity*, Westport: Praeger, 2004, p. 35.

⁸⁸ Int. Archbishop Stanley L. Hara, Archbishop McLaud T. Kacheche and Archbishop Paul S. Kapenga Hara, Mthebama headquarters, 13.7.2005. See ch. 7 for forms of marriage among the Zionists.

theological barrier in the individuals' lives. In this way, not much has been carried over into Malawian Zionism from those former churches, with the exception of churches 4 and 6. All matters and expressions pertaining to the spiritual field are of Zionist-Pentecostalic and traditional African influence. The former churches' heritage, for example of the ZIM, DRC and the RCC, can be detected in parts of their attire, titles and ordinances. Zionism is an exilic movement. The restlessness of John A. Dowie bears witness to the fact, and history has repeated itself in our Malawian context. Phillips, the *mtchona* who did not return, embodies the exile of Zionism. Those who did return took Zion with them in their hearts.

Ntcheu became a Zion fortress in the country and from there, the faith spread far and wide. The majority of members were Ngoni, at least they themselves professed this as their ethnic background. There was, at long last, a common marker in the central kingdom. Zionism filled the cultural meaning void, which the demise of the Ngoni's power had created. Moreover, in their own words, Zionism corresponds to the martial nature of their ethnic group. They were allowed to wear uniforms and, at least spiritually, conquered strongholds and wielded swords of the spirit. This is the meaning of some of their dances, too. As they stomp and romp, they take possession of new lands and symbolically defeat their enemies. Zion's conquest was indeed triumphant and did not stop around Ntcheu. Without a foreign-missionary element,⁸⁹ the Zionists slowly reached other ethnic identities. Yao, Lomwe, Tonga, Chewa and Tumbuka people were converted, too. The *machona* traffic was the biggest catalyst in this, for it provided for distinctive peoples' groups to be reached by evangelists of their own cultural backgrounds, not some Ngoni emissary sent from Ntcheu.

There were, however, six denominations, not one. The key concern during the first decades was their mode of worship. I will further analyse dancing and drumming (never separated in the churches or in my record)

⁸⁹ Hany Longwe, *Identity by Dissociation: The First Group to Secede from Chilembwe's Church: A History of Peter Kalemba and the Achewa Providence Industrial Mission*, MA, Zomba: University of Malawi, 2000, p. 144.

in the next chapter. Here, the historical lines which led to this African form of worship will be drawn.

In Dowie's Zion, drums were unheard of. Neither did the Ngoni use drums. Their musical patterns are significantly different from those of the surrounding ethnic groups. They did not beat drums, but stamped their feet to the rhythm and banged their shields with spears. This, however, had enough rhythmic patterns to make the *izanusu* (diviner) go into trance.⁹⁰ Neither did Ngoni traditional dancers swing their hips.⁹¹ Still in the 1930s, Ngoni songs and dances were not accompanied by drums.⁹² Rhythm instruments were not simply absent; the Ngoni despised those who beat drums.⁹³

The explosive growth and diversity of early South African Zionism allowed dancing and drumming to enter the churches. Only few denominations were overseen by whites who would have certainly been alarmed if their congregations started to frolic in circles. I have a letter on file in which a white South African Pentecostal missionary expresses his views on the issue:

We can allow the use of drums if they are used merely as an accompaniment or a subsidiary part of the choir and congregational singing. But we must not forget the cultural background of the people we are dealing with. We must guard against wrong practices and connotations which are very often associated with the use of drums, such as calling-up or pleasing of ancestral spirits, the driving out of sickness and demons, the beating of drums to bring down the Holy Spirit etc.⁹⁴

Zulu is the background culture to South African Zionism as Ngoni is to the Malawian Zionists. The Zulu are not proficient dancers in comparison to

⁹⁰ Steven M. Friedson, *Dancing Prophets*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 154.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

⁹² Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 22.

⁹³ Margaret Read, *Children of their Fathers*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968, p. 43.

⁹⁴ Letter from Gerhard Erasmus to Eduard Wendland, AFM Malawi, minutes, 23.11.1984.

others, but they know of drumming as an element within divination and traditional wedding dances.⁹⁵ Moreover, we can be sure that South African Zionists absorbed different traits, including drumming and dancing, from ethnic identities other than the Zulu. These developments led Mr. Shumaker to point out at pains that his denomination does not make noise with drums or jump about in circles.⁹⁶ In fact, the absence of dancing verified his claim for the CCACZ of SA to be the ‘original’ Zion church, since Dowie did not beat any drums. This was still the case in the mid-1920s in the CCACZ in South Africa, but how did it change?

For the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3), the change might have come during Phillips tenure at the helm of the church. I assume this happened after Royall’s departure, by 1928. What might have endeared drumming and dancing to Phillips was his origin from Likoma Island here in Malawi. The *mganda* dance was very popular on the island. *Mganda* is a form of the *beni* dance and fraternity. It was held in Phillips’ mother tongue, Tonga. Even more significant is that the Anglican bishops on Likoma had accepted it and acted as patrons of the dance.⁹⁷ Therefore Phillips had perceived dances as permissible in church even before he left for South Africa and became a Zionist.

However, the introduction of drums in South Africa did not automatically trigger the same in Malawi. For that, the churches were already too autonomous. The Holy Apostolic Church (3) in Malawi was at that time led by Wilson Mtokoma. In 1938, Mtokoma’s daughter Estere had a vision during a meeting that the church should use drums henceforth.⁹⁸ They then called a general meeting and after some discussion and Bible study decided that indeed the children of God are

⁹⁵ Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 105.

⁹⁶ Van Buren Shumaker, Certificate for J. Wesley Dingiswayo, Johannesburg: General Headquarters of the C.C.A. Church in Zion, 4.8.1924, NAM.

⁹⁷ Terence O. Ranger, *Dance and Society in Eastern Africa, 1890-1970*, London: Heinemann, 1975, pp. 117, 121.

⁹⁸ Int. Bishop Pearson Fasinesi Lipenga Magagula, Kunthawira, Chileka, 4.3.2004.

allowed to drum in their meetings.⁹⁹ The Bible translation in use at that time was the *Buku Lopatulika* and there in Ps. 150:4 they found the word *malینگaka*, meaning *small drum*.¹⁰⁰ This term came to represent all Zionists who use drums in their meetings, they are those of *malینگaka*, whereas some other churches continued as *ya bata*, of calm; they do not use drums.¹⁰¹

Starting out as “*bata*,” the Ntcheu CCACZ (1) turned to make a joyful noise from 1938 until this day. Ezra Valilani had returned in 1929 from Mesina goldmine in South Africa. His wife, Mrs. Valilani, received a revelation in 1938 that the Lord wanted the church to use drums.¹⁰² This prophecy was first scrutinized by other seers in the church and eventually approved to be a divine decree. Instructions about the drums were given, too, for example they had to be carved from the trunks of the *mlombwa* tree, one of Malawi’s most precious hardwoods. Therefore, in the same year, 1938, both the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion and the CCACZ became *malینگaka*. As already stated, drumming was not a part of Ngoni culture. But its late introduction in 1938 constituted quite a gap on the timeline and thus provided sufficient distance between old Ngoni culture and this novel element in Zionist worship. (That dreams and prophecies were legitimate instruments to introduce drumming has its parallels in the history of Zimbabwean Zionism.)¹⁰³

Both churches looked to the Bible for the verification of drums and dancing. Their findings were historically correct, for dancing was known both in the Old and New Testament. For the Old Testament, this might be obvious. For the newer covenant, Jeremias describes a circular round

⁹⁹ Int. Mrs. F. Chaluluka, Rev. R.L. Gama, Rev. L. Mbewe, Rev. P. Makanani, Whwayo, 6.11.2005.

¹⁰⁰ *Buku Lopatulika ndilo Mau a Mulungu, The Bible in Nyanja*, Union Version, First edition in 1922. It was revised in 1936 and 1966.

¹⁰¹ In Chinyanja, Ps. 150:4 reads: “Mlemekezeni ndi lingaka ndi kuthira mang’ombe.” *Buku Lopatulika, ndilo Mau a Mulungu*, Blantyre: the Bible Societies, revised ed. 1966.

¹⁰² Int. Bishop P.E. Makoko, Kaluzi, 28.2.2006.

¹⁰³ Caleb Z. Mutingwende, *The Church of God in Zimbabwe*, www.aic_research@yahoo.com, 15.3.2006.

dance of men, which certainly has some resemblance to what is going on in contemporary African Zion.¹⁰⁴

As a bone of contention, drums brought a different kind of dancing into the churches, if compared to the Ngoni war songs or acapella music. Some Zionist denominations carry out very excessive physical movements, often at the point of ecstasy. Timewise, the services I visited consisted from 60% to 80% of music and dancing. In addition, the drums are the Zionists' belltowers, as their neighbourhoods will readily testify.

Most Zionists in Malawi dance and drum. The Ziyoni ya bata (2) near Salima is the centre of calm and they have their own explanation why the other Zionists have become so noisy. It was not a vision from the Lord, but a *mzungu*, a white man, who introduced drumming to Malawian Zionism.¹⁰⁵ This man, by the name of John Lewis, had come in the 1930s to Malawi and joined the Zion church. To make the symbolism of 'impure drumming' perfect, my informants stated that Lewis had to be excommunicated from the church after a short time because he "*committed adultery with a prophetess while praying on a mountain.*"¹⁰⁶

Whatever the initial reason, the church does not use any instruments and only allows muffled hand clapping during worship. This speaks of immanence. The Zion ya bata members wear unadorned robes and simplicity is written all over their appearance and conduct. The human voice is, to use Engelke's words, "live and direct."¹⁰⁷ In line with the Masowe weChishanu Church in Zimbabwe, Zion ya bata views material things, including instruments, to stand in the way of revelation.

In addition to Zion ya Bata, six other churches have remained *ya bata*, out of thirty denominations. Such proportions again supply the silent minority with their distinctive features. For the churches that came out of the Dutch Reformed Church (4, 5 and 6), drumming never had a chance to

¹⁰⁴ Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975, p. 93.

¹⁰⁵ Int. J. Office, N. Mbewe, K. Chimunga, B. Kenamu, W. Nantholo, J. Masinja, Zion ya Bata (2), Salima, 29.7.2007.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Matthew Engelke, *A Problem of Presence. Beyond Scripture in an African Church*, Berkeley: University of California, 2007, p. 205.

enter into what they still perceive to be a service marked by solemnity. The leaders of the Apostolic Faith Church (7) group dancing and watching lewd movies into one class. Neither is allowed to their members.¹⁰⁸ They do not discriminate between say, some nightclub dancing and what goes on in Zion's communities on Sunday afternoons in Malawi. The Mpingo wa Atumwi (17) takes yet a different stand against drums. To them, it is an old-fashioned and outdated mode of worship which smacks too much of rural folklore. They threw the drums out and have plugged in their keyboards. The Zion Christian Prophecy Church (11) in the north has still another reason not to employ drums. They have a Christianized version of the *ingoma* dance, which was traditionally not accompanied by percussion instruments.

This change from *bata* to *malingaka* is one of the most significant developments in Malawian Zionism. With the introduction of drums came a closer resemblance to traditional African culture and traditional religious tenets. The change brought about by the visions was not merely spiritual, but highly cultural. It must be borne in mind that Malawian Pentecostalism before World War II was a *machona* imported faith. They relied on missionary visits and, because the colonial regime demanded it, white supervision or at least affiliation. Pentecostals at that time would not only have looked into the Bible to see whether drumming was permissible; they would have written letters to Salisbury and Johannesburg to ask their white overseers' opinion on the issue.¹⁰⁹ Zion, in contrast to the Pentecostals, was not under any white restraint and therefore more at liberty to express something truly African. Dancing has, in this case, been a revitalizing cultural element, not unlike the role it still does play among North American Indians.¹¹⁰ Zionist dancing must be approached from an anthropological angle. It might have entertainment

¹⁰⁸ Int. E.G. Zingwa naBengo, Bishop L.Z. Bengo, A. Julius, Dzpirana vlg., Ntcheu, 17, 18. 8. 2005.

¹⁰⁹ Ulf Strohhorn, *Pentecostalism in Malawi: A History of the AFM*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005, p. 144.

¹¹⁰ Anya P. Royce, *The Anthropology of Dance*, Alton: Dance Books, 2002, p. 23.

purposes, it certainly has work-out value, but it is worlds away from ballroom dancing or nightclub boogies.

More significant, music opened up an entire new pathway into the spiritual field. I will later point out that drumming and dancing are linked to healing functions and prophesying. This will be followed by a discussion whether music is a way into the spiritual field (like worship is in younger Pentecostal assemblies worldwide) or if it constitutes the spiritual field as such (which is the case with traditional possession cults).

Ifa-ifa, Jordan and the Zion wa Kang'oma's origins stand for Zion's rather bumpy demarcation from Reformed Christianity. It might be a matter of course that Nkhoma Synod and Zionism could not be accommodated under the same roof. Revivalist facets within the synod and the survival of Reformed elements within Zionism prove, however, that they had had more common grounds in the beginning of the 20th century than nowadays. (Andrew Murray, the leading Holiness proponent in South Africa and spiritual father of the Nkhoma Mission, had been healed in Mrs. Baxter's healing home in London, thus pointing to one common root between the DRC and Zionism.)¹¹¹ However, those early similarities could not be found any longer in the 1920s and 1930s. For Malawi, these events confirm a pattern, which revivalist groups have found themselves in all over the world. Initially, they did not want to leave their churches. They tried to integrate their new-found spiritual life within the mother church, which they love. Eventually, however, they were not willing to give up their spiritual life for the sake of church unity and submission. Early Zionist and Pentecostals left their former churches half drawn and half pushed. The push, in this case, came from the missionaries of the DRC, who withdrew the permission to preach. In comparison it should be noted that the Roman Catholic Church hardly fits into this pattern in Malawi. She has been more successful to integrate revivalist elements. The synods of the CCAP were among the earliest expressions of Christianity in Malawi. Zionism, like a new kid around the block, needed to define itself over and against Reformed Christianity.

¹¹¹ Communication with Klaus Fiedler, Blantyre, 4.3.2009.

Such a mechanism of contrasting will be repeated by later generations of Zion, who had to draw the lines regarding Pentecostals and the *Vapostoli* churches.

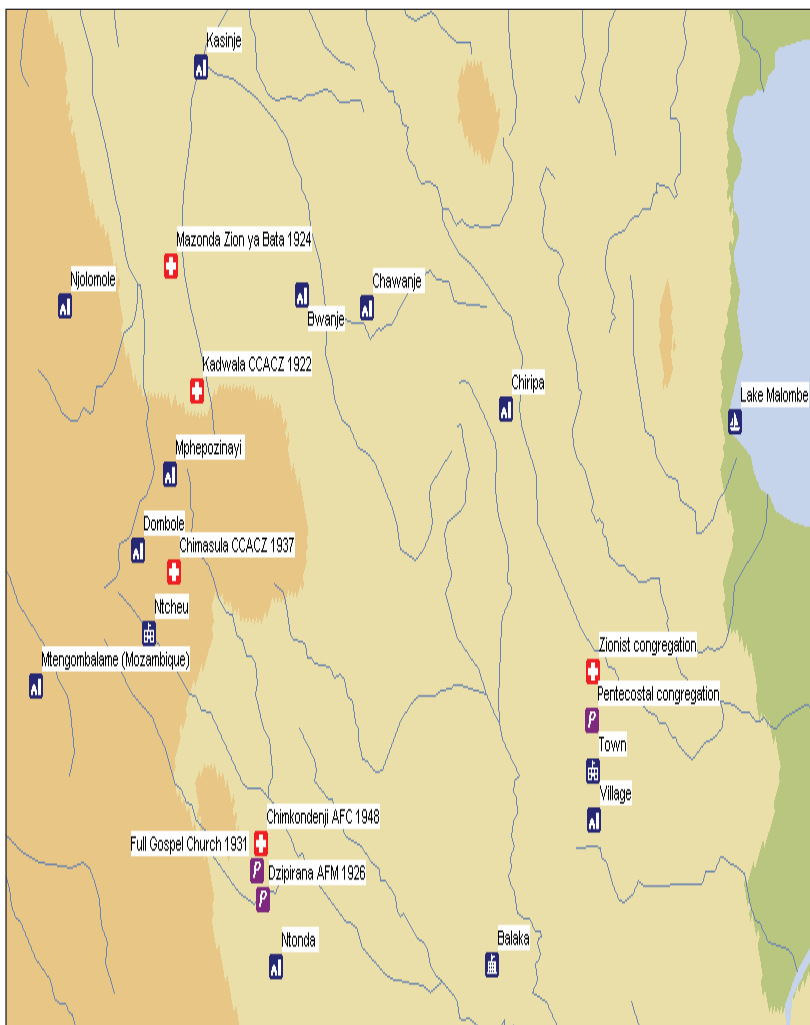
h. Denominations that Have Become Extinct

For completion's sake, here are two churches from the period under survey that did not make it. It might well be that more denominations had made a start in Malawi, but documentation could only be found for the two listed below. Sundkler discovered that Mabilitsa's church, The Apostolic Church in Zion of South Africa, was registered with the Nyasaland administration in 1926.¹¹² This might not be confused with the CCACZ, which, as we have seen, was also registered in 1926. Mabilitsa had great success in South Africa and a Malawian branch seems probable. We can also be sure that this group was not affiliated with Mtokoma, since Phillips and Mabilitsa had separated already in 1920. Whatever its start, the Apostolic Church in Zion of South Africa was discontinued in Malawi. The Zion Restoration Church, mentioned by Wishlade, founded by *machona* in the 1940s, was said to have had three local congregations in Mulanje in 1956.¹¹³ The church can no longer be found and seemed to have been extinct by 1980, when Chakanza did his research.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets of South Africa*, London: Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 49.

¹¹³ Robert L. Wishlade, *Sectarianism in Southern Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1965, p. 24.

¹¹⁴ Joseph C. Chakanza, *An Annotated List of African Instituted Church 1900 – 1981*, Zomba: Sources for the Study of Religion in Malawi, no. 10, 1983, church no. 133.



Map 2: The First Zionist and Pentecostal denominations in Malawi all started in Ntcheu District (not included is Ifa-ifa [4] and daughters, which originated near Dedza in 1930)

3. The Second Generation: 1948 - 1976

Apostolic Faith Church (7) – Pastor Herbert Kakhobwe - 1948

Herbert Kakhobwe Chimkondenji was born around 1890 as the son of a village headman in Ngoniland, at Chimkondenji village, a place between Mpira dam and Dzonzi hills. He went to South Africa in search of work and was employed at the gold mine in Mesina. There he was converted in the Apostolic Faith Mission and later returned to Malawi. Kakhobwe is the earliest messenger of Pentecost to Malawi and because of him the Apostolic Faith Mission is the oldest Pentecostal church in the country, since he came back before 1926. (Some mention Lighton Kalambule to be the first Pentecostal, 1931, and Chimbewa village to be the birthplace of Pentecostalism in the country, but those records need to be corrected.)¹¹⁵ The General Secretary of the AFM of SA wrote to the Chief Native Commissioner, Blantyre, Nyasaland, on the 8th September 1926, “...as we have a large number of Native adherents who have come from Nyasaland, got into touch with our work here and have returned there again...”¹¹⁶ The leader of those groups in Ntcheu was Herbert Kakhobwe. He had established the AFM with great success in the district. The first Pentecostal church in the country was at Dzipirana, near Mpira Dam, close to Kampepuza Trading Centre. One early convert is Mayi Aeda Julius, more than ninety years old in 2005.¹¹⁷ She remembers Kakhobwe, and how he started the church at the time when people began to take *mchape*.¹¹⁸

From the beginning he wore a white robe, not Pentecostal in fashion at all, but giving evidence of the Zionist influence, which he had encountered in South Africa, too. Anyhow, this happened under the banner of Pentecost and was, for Ntcheu at that time, not an unusual mingling. In South Africa, the AFM Department of Foreign Missions

¹¹⁵ Gregory C. Mvula, Enson M. Lwesya, *Flames of Fire*, Blantyre: Assemblies of God Literature Center, 2005, pp. 86ff. See p. 362 for the first pioneers of Pentecost in the country.

¹¹⁶ *Apostolic Faith Mission*, file no. 1392/1926, NAM.

¹¹⁷ Int. E.G. Zingwa naBengo, L.Z. Bengo, A. Julius, Dzipirana village, Ntcheu, 17, 18. 8. 2005.

¹¹⁸ Joseph Chakanza, “Provisional Annotated List of Witch-Finding Movements in Malawi, 1850-1980”, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Brill, Vol. 15, 1985, pp. 227-243.

pondered the question whether they should send a missionary up to Malawi in order to safeguard the work under white leadership. The AFM's request was turned down for "*this Government considers the requirements of the Natives are already met by the existing Missions, they are unable to grant facilities for carrying on your work in Nyasaland.*"¹¹⁹ This refusal was significant for Kakhobwe, for he stayed in the AFM as long as it was free from white influence. A missionary did not come for the next thirty years, but Robert Chinguwo, another *mtchona* from Jali, Zomba, returned home in 1933, after he had been converted under the AFM banner in South Africa.¹²⁰ Chinguwo set out to pioneer the AFM churches around Zomba and Mulanje. Contact with Kakhobwe was made and the two pioneers worked hand in hand until 1948. That year the two men of God had a row over the question of national leadership. Chinguwo felt that the mantle belonged to him, since he was the link between the white missionary overseer of the AFM of South Africa, Moody Wright, and the colonial authority would only recognize a church if it had a white overseer.¹²¹ Chinguwo had, with bulldog tenacity, pressurized Wright to visit the AFM in Malawi in 1941. This visit indeed enhanced the standing of the church in the eyes of the administration and their members, but not in the eyes of Herbert Kakhobwe.¹²²

No matter how well Chinguwo had put the AFM on the map, he was the more senior minister in Malawi, having preceded Chinguwo by at least seven years. Kakhobwe wore his white robe and carried a staff; all pictures of Chinguwo show him in western clothing. Kakhobwe rejected all cooperation with whites, missionaries included. He saw them as those who pulled the Trojan horse of secular medicine into the church's

¹¹⁹ Letter from C.H. Wade, Acting Chief Secretary to the Government, to the General Secretary, The Apostolic Faith Mission of SA, 17.11.1926, *Apostolic Faith Mission*, file no. 1392/1926, NAM.

¹²⁰ Ulf Strohehn, *Pentecostalism in Malawi: A History of the AFM*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005, pp. 77ff.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

¹²² Moody Wright, "Missionary Report," Johannesburg; *The Comforter*, AFM of SA, Aug./Sep. 1941, p. 7.

fortress.¹²³ He had also identified some weaknesses in the white missionaries' attitude concerning the reinforcement of Old Testament values. Chinguwo rejected secular medicine, too, and would overinterpret the Old Testament as to forbid his members to even keep dogs. Yet, he craved for contact with missionaries. It had worked for him and the AFM in 1941. When the crisis over leadership reached its climax, in 1948, Chinguwo was not willing to swing the AFM into the Zionist camp. They found no better resort than to bring their quarrel before a secular court, T/A Mabuka.¹²⁴ Mulanje was Chinguwo's home turf and Kakhobwe lost. He then left the church and several AFM leaders followed him, among others Mr. Mbingwani of Repo village and Mr. Sasela. He never wanted to be called a Zionist; still today they prefer the label "Atumwi" instead of aZioni. Yet they are not to be grouped among the Apostles of Maranke or others. They display, both historically and dogmatically, all major Zionist tenets.

The Apostolic Faith Church has its headquarters in Chimkondenji village, Ntcheu, the birth and burial place of Herbert Kakhobwe. Apart from that, it has been established in Chitera, Chiradzulo; in Lilongwe with three classes; at Nkhande in Machinga district and with great success at Mwalasi, Machinga district, under the leadership of *M/levi* Justin Kachotsa Matako. Kakhobwe passed away in 1981. The leadership was then given to Yohane Muulula Chikwanje, Thenifodi Kayenda and Dickson Matawa, in that order. The current General Overseer is Lewis Zingwa Bengo. The headquarters in Ntcheu and its surrounding classes have shrunk in membership. About 1500 members count themselves to the Apostolic Faith Church, nationwide. The once towering main church on the hill is now in a dilapidated condition. However, the classes (the Zionists term for a local church) in Machinga are blossoming and we will meet them again when talking about Zionism and Islam.

¹²³ Int. Justin Kachotsa, L. Mahata, Mr Mtabwa, Mwalasi, Machinga, 5.3.2006.

¹²⁴ Int. Pastor Dick Maclean, AFM, Ngodzi, 28.9.2000.

Zion Christian Church (of Lekganyane) (8) – Mlevi Two Days Hlavu – 1950

Engenas Lekganyane founded this church in 1925 in the Northern Province of South Africa. Prior to that, he had been part of Pentecostalism's early beginnings in South Africa; the church is a secession from Edward (Motaung) Lion's Zion Apostolic Faith Mission (ZAFM).¹²⁵ Since then it has grown into the most numerous Christian denomination in South Africa and is strong in the surrounding countries, too. In Zimbabwe, the ZCC is known as Mutendi's church. Mutendi broke away with Lekganyane from the ZAFM, but became self-reliant and adapted his church to Zimbabwean circumstances. There they refer in their prayers to "*the God of Mutendi and Lekganyane*."¹²⁶ In South Africa, the leadership is episcopal and hereditary. Engenas died in 1948 and his son Edward took over the mantle, but not after his brother Joseph contested this and eventually went away with his own flock, called St. Engenas Zion Christian Church. Edward passed away in 1967 and since then his son Barnabas has been at the helm of the church.

Total numbers are hard to come by for any country, but it is estimated that more than three million Zionists pilgrimage annually to Moriah, the church's headquarters in the Limpopo Province, SA. Another source mentions four million members for South Africa.¹²⁷ The ZCC itself produced a figure of more than six million members.¹²⁸ Its size has attracted researchers in South Africa. No serious dictionary about Christianity in South Africa will omit the ZCC and more literature is available on this church than any other Zionist denomination.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Caleb Z. Mutingwende, *The Church of God in Zimbabwe*, www.aic_research@yahoogroups.com, 15.3.2006.

¹²⁶ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol. 2, The Hague: Mouton, 1974, p. 206.

¹²⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zion_Christian_Church. 26.12.2007.

¹²⁸ <http://www.seekgod.ca/bantu.htm>, 26.12.2007.

¹²⁹ Main publications are: E.K. Lukhaimane, *The Zion Christian Church of Ignatius Engenas Lekganyane, 1924 to 1948. An African Experiment with Christianity*. MA, Pietersburg: University of the North, 1980. Piet Naudé, *The Zionist Christian Church in South Africa, A Case Study in Oral Theology*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995. Allan Anderson, "The Lekganyanes and Prophecy in the Zion Christian Church", *Journal of Religion in Africa*,

1948, the year that Engenas Lekganyane died, Two Days Hlavu became an ardent follower of the ZCC. He stems from Katete village, Mzimba district, and is Ngoni by origin. He had travelled south as a *mtchona* and found employment in a hotel. Hlavu went back and pioneered the church at his homestead in 1950.¹³⁰ Edward Lekganyane visited Malawi in 1962 and was apparently impressed by the growth of the church, but refused sufficient financial support for Hlavu from South Africa. The same year, the church was registered with the government. Lekganyane encouraged Hlavu to move south and to look for work in Blantyre. Yet another source tells us that Lekganyane encouraged the establishment of a settlement in Lilongwe, which however never materialized.¹³¹ The move was significant as it meant that a big Zionist church went away from the northern Ngoni, although one class has remained in Mzimba up to this day, under the leadership of deacons Bernard and Chinguwe. Hlavu then settled in Blantyre, Chitawira. In 1967, he passed away and R. B. M'gomezulu became his successor as national leader for Malawi. M'gomezulu or Ngomezulu is the name of a Swazi clan, those first families who came north from Natal.¹³² On a visit to South Africa, Lekganyane ordained him as minister for Malawi and Mozambique. The national headquarters are in Chilobwe, Blantyre, where *Mlevi* M'gomezulu resides. The Malawian branch cannot be compared to the momentum, which its sheer numbers give it in South Africa. The ZCC is, however, one of the few Zionist denominations in the country that do grow by numbers, often fuelled by fresh *machona* input. Classes can be found in Mzimba, Mzuzu, Kasungu and more densely in the South: Mbayani, Majiga (Ndirande), Safarao,

1999, vol. 29, pp. 285-312. A. Kruger, *Die Zion Christian Church – 'n religieuse Bantoebeweging in 'n tyd vanontwrigting?* MTh, Potchefstroom, 1971. David Chidester, *Religions of South Africa*, London: Routledge, 1992, pp. 134ff.

¹³⁰ Int. Minister M'gomezulu, Blantyre, 29.6.2003. Karl Peltzer, *Some Contributions of Traditional Healing Practises towards Psychosocial Health Care in Malawi*, PhD, Universität Hannover, Sozialwissenschaftliche Fakultät, 1986, p. 54.

¹³¹ Karl Peltzer, *Some Contributions of Traditional Healing Practises towards Psychosocial Health Care in Malawi*, PhD, Universität Hannover, Sozialwissenschaftliche Fakultät, 1986, p. 55.

¹³² Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 119.

Nkolokoti, Bangwe, Mpingwe, Chikuli and Mpemba in and around Blantyre; Zarewa, Mwanza; Tsikulamowa, Ntonda and Kasinje at Ntcheu; Kankawu on the road to Balaka and Namalaka in Zomba, south of St. Mary's Secondary School, from where it has branched out to Chabwera near Liwonde and Munyali, east of Zomba. Churches in close proximity to Mozambique have branched out into that country, too. Members do not wear robes like other Zionists in the country. Instead, followers of Bishop Legkanyane display the silver five-pointed star, fastened on top of a green felt, like their South African brothers and sisters. Officials are clad in a khaki uniform, which, with its police-like helmet, reminds us of colonial gear. This they only don during Sundays, but the star can be spotted throughout the week. Healing takes a prominent role in this church, too, and they are proud to announce to rely solely on prayers for their physical wellbeing.¹³³

The ZCC is the only church among Malawi's Zionist, which is not autonomous. M'gomezulu carries no bishop's title and all ordinations are done in South Africa. Malawians are informally required to pilgrimage to the church's headquarters at Moriah, South Africa.¹³⁴ I will return to this special case when looking at leadership structures and international connections.

Entopia Zion Church (9) – Bishop Matthew Sailasi Msalawatha Ngwenyama – 1951

Matthew S. M. Ngwenyama, Ngoni by ethnic origin, was born in 1909 in Ngwenyama I village, of chief Symon Likongwe in Neno district.¹³⁵ He finished school in 1920 and got married to Falesi Zincheta in 1927. Their first child, a daughter named Rute, was born five years later. Ngwenyama found employment with the Nyasaland Railways Limited at Limbe in 1935 and four years later was transferred to Zimbabwe, where he worked with the railways, too. There, still in 1939, he became a convert of the CCACZ

¹³³ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990, p. 29.

¹³⁴ Minister Chilowa Banda, ZCC, sermon, Majiga, Ndirande, Blantyre, 9.7.2006.

¹³⁵ Int. Bishop Fraction Msalawatha Ngwenyama, Mbemba, 13.4.2006.

and upon his return to Malawi, started preaching the Gospel in his home district. He joined hands with Samuel Kayange and Amos Chimasula, who were working in Ntcheu, while Ngwenyama and his fellow preacher Chenjedzani were busy around Neno. A watershed experience came in 1950, when Ngwenyama had a wound on his leg, which yet refused to heal after prolonged prayers. He then decided to go for biomedical treatment, which eventually cured his leg but severed ties with the CCACZ. With him left a man by the name of Kachigamba, later to be called bishop. Both founded a church called Entopia Zion Church, in 1951 at Ngwenyama's home village. The spelling "Entopia" is not wrong, but an Africanized form of "Ethiopia." The term is used all over southern Africa.¹³⁶ Ngwenyama was fascinated by this name, the inspiration for it came from Isa. 18:1-7. He certainly did not choose "Entopia" for sociological or missiological definitions, but for the salvific promise and spiritual value it carried in his understanding. In Malawi, three Zionist denominations have "Entopia" in their name. The other two, the Entopia Zion Church of Kanjere (1962) and the Entopia Zion City Church of Fraction Msalawatha Ngwenyama (1999) are split-offs from this church. They have been founded because this church permits polygamy; an exception, since only three Zionist denominations in the country allow their male members to have more than one wife (the other churches being the Zion Christian Prophecy Church [11] and the New Jerusalem Zion Church [10]). Polygamy seems to have been permissible since the church's inception, but the event of a leader taking a second wife sparked off enough friction to result in schisms.¹³⁷ The leaders drained the pond to catch the fish, for both times, 1962 and 1999, the majority of members decided to leave Entopia Zion and to stay with monogamous leaders. Matthew Ngwenyama passed away in 1988. His son Gideon died two years later and since then the church has been under the leadership of Exton Herbert Gongolo, who is a grandchild of the founder. Entopia Zion Church is strongest in the Neno district with about a dozen classes. The

¹³⁶ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol. 2, The Hague: Mouton, 1974, p. 29.

¹³⁷ Int. Archbishop S. Kanjere, Entopia Zion Church, Mwansambo vlg., Chileka, 23.4.2005.

church has an inbred tendency for discord, which has manifested itself so far in six “daughter” denominations, which makes it the most fissiparous denomination in this second generation of Zionism in Malawi.

New Jerusalem Zion Church (10) – Bishop J. B. Ngulube – 1950s

The spark that set off this denomination came again from a healing controversy. The CCACZ members J. B. Ngulube, M. K. Njazi and Z. Ngodzo broke away in the late 1950s because of the mother church’s prohibition to revert to secular medicine. Added to this was what they perceived as the height of hypocrisy, as some national leaders from Ntcheu preached strict abstinence from hospitals, but the same men were known to visit doctors in secret.¹³⁸ The new church then gave members the freedom to go to hospitals, yet they are staunch proponents of faith healing, too. They are commonly referred to as “*Zioni yodya mankhwala...*” - Zionists who eat medicine. Such liberties do, however, not extend into the traditional African *sing’anga’s* consultation room; medical treatment has to be biomedical. Another feature which distinguishes them from the CCACZ is their toleration of bigamy, but that is where they draw the line; more than two wives are strictly not allowed. Elderly bishop Ngulube is still the National Overseer of this church, with its headquarters in Masumbankhunda, Lilongwe, where the church was started. He is originally from Mzimba, northern Ngoniland. *Mlevi* Salatiele Malopa is responsible for the congregations around M’gona, and Ngodzo oversees the churches in Balaka and Ntcheu. Altogether, the membership of New Jerusalem Zion Church is estimated at 2,000 in the country.

¹³⁸ Interviews Bishop Zamajeza Ngodzo, Salima, 13.8.2003; Bishop Mackford Kenward Njazi, M’gona, Lilongwe, 9.2.2004.

Zion Christian Prophecy Church (11) – Archbishop Lameck James Hara – 1953

Lameck James Hara was born in 1891 at Hora village, near Kamembe River, Mzimba district.¹³⁹ Missionaries of the Free Church of Scotland were active there, and so Lameck was reared in the Presbyterian faith during his childhood.¹⁴⁰ He was educated up to Standard 6 at Loudon mission school and left for the mines of South Africa before his twentieth birthday. He encountered Zionism at Mesina, in the Northern Province and was baptized into the CCACZ. This early event might well mean that Hara was one of the first Malawian migrant workers to convert to Zionism. He came back home in 1925 and immediately started to preach the gospel according to Zion under the banner of the CCACZ. Hara's headquarters were set up at Mbembe M'mbambo village, chief Mzikuola in Mzimba. He had great success wherever he went, with one of his accomplishments being an organized leadership team under him, which oversaw the rapid expansion of the church. This prompted another visit to South Africa, since Hara had not been ordained but sought credentials for himself and his co-workers. After his return in 1928, he ordained three men for the ministry in Mzimba district, two for Kasungu and one for the budding work across the border in Zozo village, chief Magodi, Lundazi, Zambia. His influence within the CCACZ reached well south to Lilongwe and it is said that Hara baptized there, too. All this happened under the name of the CCACZ until 1953. In that year, regional Zionists met in Cape Town and decreed on the 12th of March that forthwith all CCACZ leaders and members were to be monogamous. Hara could not subscribe to this, for he had four wives and saw no sin or biblical prohibition for his polygamy. Not willing to submit to the Ntcheu leaders, Hara split from the CCACZ and the northern Ngoni section gave itself the new name Zion Christian Prophecy Church. The grand old man passed away in 1981. Succession is dynastic in this church, too. His son Stanley, born in 1945,

¹³⁹ Int. Archbishop Stanley L. Hara, Archbishop McLeod T. Kacheche and Archbishop Paul S. Kapenga Hara, Mthebama headquarters, 13.7.2005.

¹⁴⁰ Donald Fraser, *Winning a Primitive People*, London: Seeley, Service and Co., 1914, pp. 196ff.

took over the reins, although he is assisted by three other archbishops, who together form the International Executive Committee. Stanley is already grooming his son, Paul S. Kapenga Hara, to take over after him.

With this, the Zion Christian Prophecy Church is the exception to our rule. Hara's church is the only Zionist denomination, which has gained a lasting foothold among the Northern Ngoni. Its size is impressive, yet it does not have the regional impact which Zion enjoys among the Ngoni of Ntcheu district. The church exhibits few traits, which are typical for the north. They dance a Christian version of *Ngoma*, which they call *Mzimba Ingoma*. They are, like Ng'ombe's group in Salima, Zion ya bata, so no drums are used in their meetings. This is indeed a Nguni trait, for those who came from South Africa never used drums. The church's leaders estimated their followers to be 20,000. In Malawi, about 12,000 gather in Mzimba, Kasungu, Mchinji, Nkhotakota, Dowa, Nchisi, Nkhata Bay and Lilongwe districts. The followers in Zambia gather at Lundazi, Chipata, Choma, Kitwe, Ndola, Katete, Mufulira, Mazabuka and Mpetauke.

Chipiliro Zion Church (12) – Bishop Wells Ngodzo – 1961

Wells Ngodzo's reasons for founding this denomination are similar to those of the New Jerusalem Zion Church (10). He did not agree with the CCACZ's stand against medical treatment, especially when he observed that his own leaders went to hospitals in private.¹⁴¹

Ngodzo was born at Katsekera village, Ntcheu, and had been a member of the CCACZ from 1952 to 1961. That year, he and his friend Ezra Mchona founded Chipiliro at Kadete village, chief Ganya, Ntcheu.¹⁴² It is rare that Zionist or Pentecostal churches are given non-English names. The name is a noun derived from the verb *kupirira*, which means to *bear, to stand firm in affliction* and *to hold out*. It is sometimes used by marriage counsellors who advise wives to still *suffer or put up with* (the husband). In the Christian context, it means to *prevail*. Chipiliro therefore is *perseverance or endurance*.

¹⁴¹ Int. Bishop L. Dzonzi, Sumani village, Manase, Blantyre, 2.7.2003. Int. W. Ngodzo, Mazonda village, 11.1.2005.

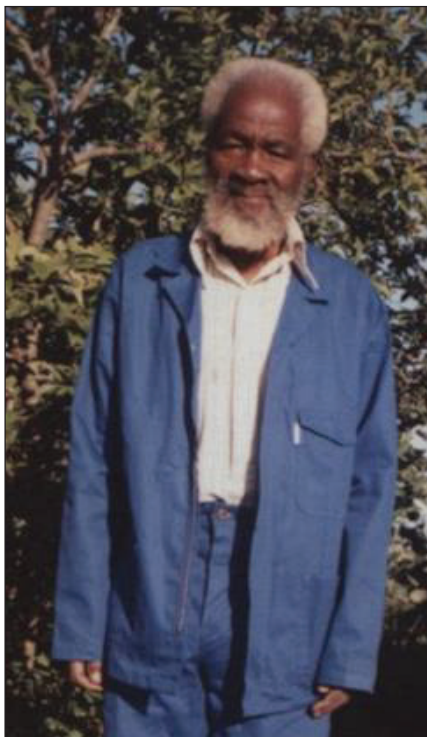
¹⁴² Int. Bishop L. Dzonzi, Blantyre, 2.7.2003.

Apart from the medical question, Chipiliro has kept all the major tenets of the CCACZ and, unlike New Jerusalem Zion, does not tolerate bigamy or polygamy. The last count of the church was in 1999 and showed 8000 members, including those in Mozambique. Two bishops are in charge of Chipiliro, with Ngodzo as overseer for the north and central region and Livison Dzonzi for the south. They are responsible for a total of 45 classes, which gather in Ntcheu with headquarters at Mazonda village, across the border in Angonia, Mozambique and in Dedza, Blantyre, Mangochi and Chikhwawa districts.

Christian Apostolic Sabbath Church in Zion (13) – Archbishop P. F. Lipenga Magagula – 1961

We met Archbishop Magagula, pictured here in 2005, when he was already ninety years old.¹⁴³

He still had an excellent command of memory and gave us insights into a life lived to the full within Zion. Piyasani Fasinesi Lipenga Magagula was born at Yimbwa village, chief Kunthembwe in Blantyre district. His parents were Ngoni people from Angonia, Mozambique. His great-grandparents had been in the *mfecane* and originally came from Swaziland. Magagula



received his basic education in a Roman Catholic primary school and became a Catholic, although his parents never joined any church. He left

¹⁴³ Int. Bishop Pearson Fasinesi Lipenga Magagula, Kunthawira, Chileka, 12.5.2005. Int. Bishop Chimpango, Bwanje, Ntcheu, 4.3.2004.

to work in Lilongwe in the 1930s, where he got married and joined the CCACZ in 1934. *“I became a Zionist because I found that religion in the Bible.”* Unfortunately, his first wife died after giving birth to their first born daughter Nadzonzi. He left for South Africa in 1937 and found employment in the Rosebeck Copper Mine. By 1949, he had found a new wife and a new church. He said that he left Malawi as a *“Ziyoni ya Sunday,”* but in South Africa, *“I found out that Zion is a Sabbath religion,”* for Magagula had joined the Christian Apostolic Sabbath Church in Zion.¹⁴⁴ He quickly rose through the ranks of the church and in 1955 Archbishop Petros Maseko of South Africa ordained Magagula as archbishop for Malawi. Maseko himself was a Ngoni from Malawi, but he did not return to the country of his birth. The two archbishops served side by side for six years in South Africa. In 1961, Magagula returned to this country. The first church was planted in 1962 at Mthandizi in Ntcheu, close to the Blantyre-Lilongwe road. By 2005, the denomination had 72 classes, mostly in Malawi and a few in Mozambique. Membership has been counted at 10,020, served by 302 pastors, *alevi* and evangelists. Those figures had been bigger, but splits have taken huge chunks out of the Christian Apostolic Sabbath Church. Headquarters are in Kunthawira village, T/A Kunthembwe, Blantyre but most believers can be found in Ntcheu. Bishop Symon Chimpango from Bwanje Trading centre is the leader there and he oversees classes at Salima, Balaka, Dedza, Mangochi and in Mozambique, too. Magagula is still in charge of the national church. He is not bothered about his succession, but trusts that the leaders will elect the right man, *“after I will have died, not now.”*

As the name says, believers keep the Sabbath and they gather on Saturdays instead of 2pm on Sundays, which is the rule for Zionists in general. The church is naturally legalistic about the Sabbath, but they are not in fellowship with other sabbathists in the country, e. g. the Seventh Day Adventists. Yet they are into millianialism and sermons about the rapture and the 1000 years of Christ’s reign on earth can be heard often.

¹⁴⁴ No reference is given to a church with this particular name by Sundkler or Anderson.

The church is the last to be formed on the *machona* pattern. After 1962, Zion denominations were still influenced, but not any longer established by migrant worker influx.

Entopia Zion Church (14) – Archbishop Satifiketi Kanjere - 1962

This church is a split-off from Entopia Zion of Ngwenyama (9). Satifiketi Kanjere was born of Ngoni parents in 1918 at Mwansambo village, chief Kuntaja, about five kilometers from Chileka airport.¹⁴⁵ He attended Mkata Primary School, owned by the Seventh Day Adventist church. His parents belonged to the same church and Kanjere became an Adventist, too. He went to South Africa in 1942 and worked as a cook in Pretoria. He returned home three years later and got married in 1948. He left for Zimbabwe in 1952



where he worked as a tailor for a few years before returning to Malawi. Kanjere had held out during all his *mtchona* years as a faithful member of the Seventh Day Adventist faith. There had been no contact with Zionists. (The picture shows the archbishop in 2003 at Choweza, Mozambique.) However, in the late 1950s the Zionists in his neighbourhood, the Entopia Zion Church locally led by Yowati Chelawe at Chileka, increasingly caught his attention. While a member and church secretary in the SDA, Kanjere tried for a couple of years to import Zion elements into the congregation's

¹⁴⁵ Int. Archbishop S. Kanjere, Mwansambo village, Chileka, 23.2.2005; 22.6.2005.

worship, such as taking off shoes in church, but his efforts were to no avail. What eventually made him jump ship in 1958 were the SDA's internal quarrels. Zion promised to be much more harmonious to Kanjere. He was appalled, too, by the fact that some Adventist members were dancing the Gule Wamkulu, a traditional Chewa dance, which Kanjere attributes to spiritism.¹⁴⁶ However, the new-found harmony within this Zion church only lasted for three years. As described, polygamy became permissible in the Entopia Zion of Ngwenyama (9). Kanjere, together with other leaders, strongly objected to this, walked out in 1961 and founded his own Entopia Zion in 1962. This proved to be a successful move for Kanjere, since most members followed him, and thereby opted for monogamy, too. He did not import his SDA Sabbathism into the church; they worship on Sunday afternoons.

Since then the church has grown to 678 classes, which gather at Blantyre district (in 34 classes), Ntcheu (72), Lower Shire (175), Mulanje (18). The remaining 379 classes are in Mozambique, in the Chiweza, Tete and Dowa areas. For total membership, the regional bishops have given a figure of 22,812 baptized believers. Satifiketi Kanjere became emeritus bishop in 2004, when the church elected L. Ligopolo as national bishop.

The New Zion Church (15) – Bishop Payambe Enock Makoko – 1967

Payambe Enock Makoko was born in 1934 at Kadwala village, chief Ganya, Ntcheu.¹⁴⁷ He was baptized in the CCACZ as a 14-year old boy. In 1954, he went to South Africa as a migrant worker. In search for a spiritual home, Makoko came to a Zionist church, where Europeans were part of the congregation. Those white people subscribed to everything Zion, yet they had the liberty to seek biomedical treatment. This brought Makoko into conflict with the beliefs of his home church, which he eventually discarded. He started his denomination in 1967 at his home village, Kadwala, chief Ganya. Therefore, the “New” in the church’s name stands for permission to seek medical help. Yet Makoko is known as a bishop

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Int. Bishop Payambe E. Makoka, Kaluzi, 28.2.2006.

with healing powers. This is one reason for the growth of the church. The only other tenet, which sets them apart from the CCACZ, is the fact that members are allowed to grow tobacco. Ntcheu is a district where much of this cash crop is grown and therefore a big part of the population relies on it.

The New Zion Church's headquarters are still at Kadwala. Their infrastructure is still under development and so the three annual meetings are held at Mtumba F. P. School, Mphepozinai. They claim to be an international church, for Bishop Gumbo is their leader across the border in Angonia, Mozambique. Bishop Makoko estimates to have 2,000 members (in 2006), who gather in twelve classes with as many recognized leaders.

Apositoli Zion Church (16) – Bishop Venancio Naidze Kamwana – 1972

Venancio Naidze Kamwana was born in the mid 1930s of Ngoni parents at Singano village, chief Kuntaja, Blantyre.¹⁴⁸ He belonged to the Thamanda Church,¹⁴⁹ a Malawian AIC, with sabbathist tenets.¹⁵⁰ Kamwana was apparently dissatisfied with the spiritual depth of the church and looked for more in the neighbourhood. He then joined Bishop Kanjere's Entopia Zion Church (11) and became a full-blown Zionist. Kamwana was well educated for his day and age. In the 1960s, his secular career advanced and he became Court Chairman at the Chileka traditional court. The reasons why he left Kanjere can probably be found in the personal leadership aspirations of both men. In 1972, Kamwana founded the Apositoli Zion Church at Kumbilina village, chief Kunthembwe, Blantyre. The church is not small by Zionist standards in the country; they counted 2465 members in 2004. However, the spread is limited to 21 classes to the north of Blantyre (at chiefs Kunthembwe, Chigaru and Kuntaja) and no classes can be found in Ntcheu.

¹⁴⁸ Int. Bishop Goodson Gabriel Kandodo, Apositoli Zion Church, M'gundo village, 8.8.2004 and 29.4.2005.

¹⁴⁹ Rodrick Kajamu, *History of Thamanda Seventh-Day Church*, Zomba: Kachere, Kachere Documents no. 21, 2006.

¹⁵⁰ Int. Bishop Samson Chirikumbuyo, Zion Sabbath Kenani Church, Bwanje, 12.1.2005.

Goodson Gabriel Kandodo (pictured with his wife) was born in 1966 at Kumbilina. Baptized into the Roman Catholic Church, he nevertheless turned to Zion as an eleven year old boy. Some years later Kandodo started preaching with Kamwana and the young man's message was well received in the surrounding villages. Before Naidze Kamwana passed away in 1993, he had already appointed Kandodo as his successor. The church is rich in symbols and regalia, as I will point out later. One major difference between them and other Zionists is that they baptize infants. This was introduced by Kamwana and he defended it with a strong belief in *peccatum originale*, original sin. To them, as in the Roman Catholic doctrine, baptismal water removes inherited sin.



Mpingo wa Atumwi (17) – Bishop W. Paulosi and Bishop E. J. J. Masina – 1974

The name of this denomination, “The church of the Apostles,” should not betray one to group it among the *Vapostoli*.¹⁵¹ It had a local beginning without a clear-cut heritage, but became more and more Zionist throughout the years and cascading leadership transitions. The church made its debut with W. Paulosi in the early 1960s. He was not a Ngoni, but had a Lomwe background with his home in Mulanje. He moved to Blantyre and started a local congregation in Chilomoni, which is a semi-urban settlement on the outskirts of the big city. Some of the first cadre

¹⁵¹ Int. W. Ngodzo, Mazonda village, Ntcheu, 11.1.2005. Int. Bishop Kaelama B. Dimba, Ntcheu, 12.1.2005. Int. Pastor Ereck E. Dauya, Blantyre, 14.8. and 2.12.2004.

members came over from a *Vapostoli* church, the Akapolo a Yesu Church (Slaves of Jesus), who sought a new spiritual home after quarrels about dress code during worship.¹⁵² The character of the church reflected the locality. Different Malawian ethnic groups could be found, the majority of members was young, adapting to life in town and its predominant European dress-code, yet reclaiming a part of their Africanness during worship in this church. They used drums at that time and dressed in long white robes. However, in some aspects the church was not Zionist, it looked rather like a forerunner to the many neo-pentecostal and charismatic churches which started to mushroom in such townships in the 1980s.

Chandiyang'ana took over after Paulosi's death. His ministry in Chilomoni was not so successful and the growth discontinued for some time. Chandiyang'ana, however, was a Ngoni and had a natural inclination towards Zionism. During his tenure, Elifala Jede Josam Masina joined the church. He was born a Ngoni and born into Zionism, too, in early 1934 at Kalipande village, chief Ganya, Ntcheu. Masina was a businessman by profession, selling groceries between Malawi and Mozambique. One day he became almost fatally injured in a car accident at Lizulu, but the staff at Zomba Central Hospital saved his life. This did not go down well with his CCACZ leaders, who subsequently excommunicated him for seeking secular medical help. His only Good Samaritan was a member of the Apostolic Faith Church (7), who took care of him in hospital. Masina then joined that church out of gratitude, but some issues made this a short guest performance. He did not see eye to eye with the demand to worship barefoot and left the church to become a member of the Mpingo wa Atumwi under Chandiyang'ana in Chilomoni in 1974.¹⁵³ Masina was a well-liked and established man in Ntcheu and both times, he did not exit alone. His local congregation at Mazonda village, Ntcheu, was therefore made up of former CCACZ and Apostolic Church members. Members are

¹⁵² Joseph C. Chakanza, *An Annotated List of African Instituted Church 1900 – 1981*, Zomba: Sources for the Study of Religion in Malawi, no. 10, 1983, see churches nos. 31 and 35.

¹⁵³ Joseph C. Chakanza, *An Annotated List of African Instituted Church 1900 – 1981*, Zomba: Sources for the Study of Religion in Malawi, no. 10, 1983, see churches nos. 31 and 35.

allowed to seek biomedical care because of Masina's testimony. Numbers have gone down at Chilomoni and one would never guess that this is still the headquarters of the more vibrant congregations in Ntcheu. Masina swung the church full scale into Zionism. His older brother Kamuyamba Chisale, residing at Kanzangaya village, chief Njolomole, Ntcheu, took over as bishop after Masina's death in 2000.¹⁵⁴ In 2005, the church claimed to have had 5000 members. They gather in 12 classes, mainly in the Blantyre and Ntcheu districts and are looked after by ten *alevi*.

a. Developments and more Bones of Contention: Sabbathism, Polygamy and Healing

“Also, it seems that inspired faith-healing,
that bastard child of our own religious establishment,
was here in the process of eclipsing the forms of Protestant orthodoxy...”¹⁵⁵

Demarcations to all sides mark the second generation of Zionism in the country. Kakhobwe's Apostolic Faith Church (7) drew the lines against Pentecostalism and foreign control. From that time onward, Zion and Pentecost have never again walked on the same path and their differences have become more pronounced as years went by. Zion is, by definition, non-white, whereas all the early *machona* Pentecostal churches in Malawi were taken over by white missionaries from 1944 on.¹⁵⁶

That some of Zion would take a turn into Sabbathism seems inevitable. Sabbathist churches are strong in the region and Zionists do have a tendency to follow the Old Testament letter of the Law. It would only be a matter of time for a *mtchona* to incorporate the Sabbath into Zion, as was the case with Lipenga Magagula (13), who adopted Saturday worship from South African Zionists. Yet different is Kanjere's (14) spiritual journey, who came out of a SDA church and retained the Sabbath after his

¹⁵⁴ Int. Levi Dickson Chigona, Manja, 27.2.2006.

¹⁵⁵ Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People*, London: University of Chicago, 1985, p. 167.

¹⁵⁶ Ulf Strohehn, *Pentecostalism in Malawi: A History of the AFM*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005, chapter 3.

conversion to Zion. Both cases, however, prove that pollination goes only one way: Sabbathism can be incorporated into Zionism, but not vice versa. The Sabbath Zion churches are strong in numbers and persuasion. Like drumming, sabbathism is an either – or marker of Zionism in the country, meaning that Zionism can be upholding the Sabbath or not, they can be drumming or not. All these varieties are possible; they are practised and will not go away.

The dispute for or against polygamy has raged in many African churches and Malawian Zionists are no exception (polygyny is the more correct term but I will use the one that is wider known). Pentecostals were not spared from it; even the Assemblies of God flirted with the idea, which caused a split among them.¹⁵⁷

With Malawi's Zionists, three denominations allow their members to have more than one wife. There was, from the beginning, a known and silently tolerated practise of polygamy among the CCACZ and other churches. An official declaration of South African Zionists in 1953, which the CCACZ in Malawi accepted and endorsed, brought the issue onto the table and pronounced an anathema over polygamy. Then followed the big split in the north, when Hara decided to stick to his additional three wives and let go of his alliance to the mother church. Two more denominations (9 and 10) came out of the CCACZ; still today they allow their male members to have more than one wife. However, the issue has rested for more than fifty years. 90% of Malawi's Zionist denominations are monogamous and certainly more than 99% of all Zionist marriages in the country are unions between two people only.

Divine healing, as they call it, is one of the strongest markers of Zion and establishes identity. Any differences about this central tenet are therefore likely to cause breakaways and new denominations. This happened many times in Malawi. The bone of contention is if a believer is allowed to use secular medicine.

¹⁵⁷ Gregory C. Mvula, Enson M. Lwesya, *Flames of Fire*, Blantyre: Assemblies of God Literature Center, 2005, p. 111.

We don't mix our doctrine with the use of medicine. If one is tired with healing prayers, let him go, let him say'. Please, since I have had a habit of using medicine from my parents where I lived, there in Egypt, we used to have pots of potatoes, fried fish, or fried meat, melons, etc.', we say, 'go back...' Zion Christian Church does not allow its members mixing holy water with pills or medicine tablets. Zion does not allow this in this church.¹⁵⁸

To the Zionists, secular means both, *western* medicine and African herbalists, sometimes called "black and white medicine." This was not an issue during the first generation, simply because Malawi was far away from a nationwide medical coverage for the population. Western medicine during those decades served to keep the British army in working order, to care for the expatriate community and to keep the "native" quarters as much as possible quarantined from the European population.¹⁵⁹ There plainly was no medical aid available in the villages of Ntcheu district during the 1920s to 1940s. The CCACZ did not face any crisis by prohibiting the non-existent. Then came the year 1950 when Mr. Ngwenyama found a wound on his leg, an ulcer with subsequent church historical importance. Medical treatment had by then become available. The Zionists' faith in faith healing was for the first time put to a real test by the alternative of bio-medical care (biomedicine was 'alternative' medicine since it came later to the scene). For some, the test of medical pluralism was too severe and ensuing conflicts led to schisms.¹⁶⁰ Included was a subtle motif against European and American missionaries, too. They were looked upon as trying to undermine the original Pentecostal and Zionist stand against all secular medical aid.¹⁶¹ They had a point. The Zionists knew that missionaries were instrumental in swinging the

¹⁵⁸ Minister Chilowa Banda, ZCC (8), sermon, Majiga, Ndirande, Blantyre, 9.7.2006.

¹⁵⁹ Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills*, Stanford: University Press, 1991, p. 38.

¹⁶⁰ John M. Janzen, *The Quest for Therapy in Lower Zaire*, London: University of California Press, 1978, p. xviii.

¹⁶¹ Int. National General Secretary Eston T. Mlangeni and Mrs. Mlangeni, Zion Church, Ndirande, 7.9.2006.

Pentecostals' stand on the issue. This had happened in the Full Gospel Church, the AoG¹⁶² and the AFM,¹⁶³ accompanied by great clamour and accusations between the *machona* pioneers and foreign missionaries. Pentecostals observing this often drew their own conclusions and, in the case of Herbert Kakhobwe, came over to Zion (7).

Within Zionism, the stories differ slightly. To some, the refusal of biomedical care meant the absence of mercy. This was dramatized by a child's suffering (for example church no. 18, Bishop Dimba's story) or accidents. Bishop Livison Dzonzi, overseer for southern Malawi of Chipiliro Church (12), had formerly been a member of the African Apositoli Church (led by Bishop Muuluka of Dzimpita, T/A Phambala, Ntcheu), until 1982. That year, he was stung by a swarm of bees and sought biomedical help. This was sufficient reason to excommunicate him from the church. Looking for more liberty, he joined the Chipiliro Church.¹⁶⁴ Others detected hypocrisy with leaders who preached faith healing from the pulpit while the same people went to the clinics in secret. The New Jerusalem Zion Church (10) was founded to avoid such hypocrisy.¹⁶⁵ Summing it up for the CCACZ, they had lost valuable members and entire congregations during this second generation and, because their stand continued relentlessly, the drain continued into the next generation.

Another distinction between Zionists and Pentecostals became more pronounced during this period. When there is a need for healing prayers, Zionists only pray for their own. Healing is not on offer for non-members. Whoever wants to be healed must be baptized first. Healing has thus become a recruiting device, certainly one of the most powerful catches, which the Zionists employ. Pentecostals, on the other hand, attach fewer strings to their healing ministry. They lay hands on unbelievers, too. This

¹⁶² Gregory C. Mvula, Enson M. Lwesya, *Flames of Fire*, Blantyre: Assemblies of God Literature Center, 2005, pp. 138ff.

¹⁶³ Ulf Strohehn, *Pentecostalism in Malawi: A History of the AFM*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005, pp. 101f.

¹⁶⁴ Int. Bishop L. Dzonzi, Blantyre, 2.7.2003.

¹⁶⁵ Int. Bishop Zamajeza Ngodzo, Salima, 13.8.2003; Bishop Mackford Kenward Njazi, M'gona, Lilongwe, 9.2.2004.

distinction between Zionist and Pentecostal theologies has its origin in the USA. Dowie only prayed for believers. His elder, John G. Lake, however, grasped healing as an evangelistic tool and subsequently changed his stand on the issue. He had practised an 'unconditional' healing ministry during the Azusa Street years and continued with it after he had landed on South African shores in 1908.

The CCACZ still has not revoked its anathema of biomedical medicine and bedevils those that have become 'weak in faith.' We have seen how this doctrine is a hot potato among Malawi's Zionists. How has it evolved outside of the country? Coming from Dowie's total claim, the doctrine had already cooled down on its way to South Africa. Le Roux said during his Zionist years, "*This glorious blessing is only for the children of God. Nobody can be forced to practice Divine Healing. We do not hold that anybody will be excluded from heaven because of the use of medicine.*"¹⁶⁶ This statement shows more tolerance than Dowie had been able to muster. It is interesting to note that the mother church in the USA has by now taken a different stand, too. Long gone are Dowie's condemning words about "*Doctors, Drugs and Devils*," Faith healing is still recommended, but medical help as such is not condemned any longer. The church nowadays says that,

"Medical science has made great advances during our twentieth century and it is nothing short of miraculous the help that may be given through surgical procedures, such as kidney transplants, open-heart surgery etc."¹⁶⁷

b. Denominations no longer with us

Malawi became an independent country during the second generation of Zionism. As stated, this form of Christianity is here not first and foremost an expression of political autonomy, as some have concluded from the

¹⁶⁶ Bengt Sundkler, *Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists*, London: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 23.

¹⁶⁷ Christian Catholic Church, *This We Believe*, Zion, Illinois: Zion Headquarters, 1994, p. 40.

South African scene.¹⁶⁸ Yet many *machona* churches, who had been founded and fuelled as expressions of autonomy in South Africa, found similar conditions of political repression in Nyasaland. The antagonism against white rulers lost its momentum in 1966 with independence, while South Africa had to wait another 30 years for it. The exilic character of Zionism is therefore stronger in South Africa.

It might well be that some denominations discontinued in Malawi because of the suddenly missing exilic aspect. For example the *Bantu Church* from Nkhata Bay, introduced from South Africa to Malawi in the 1960s, was certainly not Zionist by origin, but displayed some of its tenets. We tried hard to retrace it in Usisya, but it ceased to exist some years back.¹⁶⁹ The same applies to the New Jerusalem Church of God.¹⁷⁰ I am not sure if this was a Zionist church, since many Christian churches across the board are called New Jerusalem something. This group could not be found any longer at Nkhata Bay during our field work in 2004. Further mentioned is the Zion Sunday Church by Bishop Dimba (under denomination no. 18), which became defunct in the middle of the 1970s.

The Zion Gospel Church from Ntcheu was called Zion Gospel Church, Mahone Mission.¹⁷¹ It was started by Gerson M. Jeremiah in the 1970s, who came out of CCACZ and also worked for some time with Enos Numeri Ng'ombe. Jeremiah teamed up with Edgar Mahone, who came from the South African CCACZ on a visit to Malawi in 1982. These days, no trace of the church can be found in Ntcheu. We further identified two churches, which have not survived their founders' departures. Amos Chimasula, one of the elder statesmen of Zion in this country, started the African Baptist Church, where suddenly everything that he was opposed to as a Zionist became permissible, such as polygamy, divorce, beer drinking and smoking. Chimasula was still alive in 1982, but the African Baptist Church

¹⁶⁸ Linda E. Thomas, *Under the Canopy*, Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1999, p. 16.

¹⁶⁹ Joseph C. Chakanza, *An Annotated List of African Instituted Church 1900 – 1981*, Zomba: Sources for the Study of Religion in Malawi, no. 10, 1983, church no. 37.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, church no. 103.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, church no. 130.

has left no trace.¹⁷² Bishop Dunga broke away from the Entopia Zion Church of Kanjere and started his Zion Bible Church at Chileka. This group was discontinued and Dunga went back to his home in the Lower Shire valley.

4. The Third Generation: 1977 - 2012

Zion Sabbath Church by Dimba (18) – Bishop Welford Belson Dimba – 1977

This is a small church which had its classes decimated from six to one over the last years. Left is the headquarters at Chikadya village, chief Ganya, Ntcheu, with Bishop Dimba in charge of 400 members.¹⁷³

Dimba was born in 1954 at the same place, Chikadya village, and of Ngoni parents. The family belonged to the CCACZ with Amos Chimasula as the prominent leader in the area. One day, Dimba's son fell sick and prayers started to go up to heaven for the boy's recuperation. The situation worsened and prophets and prophetesses were called in to find out the root cause of the sickness and its therapy. All this did not help and, from a CCACZ perspective, Dimba snapped when he brought his son to Balaka hospital. They came too late and the lad died at Balaka. This incident caused a lot of resentment and bitterness in Dimba's heart. He blamed the church for not allowing his son medical treatment in good time. He left the church and founded a new congregation called Zion Sunday Church. It had become defunct by the mid 1970s and Dimba was on the lookout for a new allegiance. His old friend Chimpango Chadza was about to leave the CCACZ, too, and decided to join his uncle's church, the Christian Sabbath Zion Church (13). The good uncle is none less than the archbishop himself, Lipenga Magagula. Dimba and Chimpango lead the class in Ntcheu for some time, but fell out with each other over a leadership dispute.¹⁷⁴ The schismatic leader that he is, Dimba's behaviour alienated the leaders and he was excommunicated from the Christian

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, church no. 10.

¹⁷³ Int. Mr. Kaelama Dimba, Bwanje Trading Centre, 4.8.2004.

¹⁷⁴ Int. Mr. Mzowa and Bishop Sporo Saguga, Bwanje, 3.3.2006.

Sabbath Zion Church in 1977. Magagula then confirmed Chimpango as bishop for the Ntcheu district and he made Dimba's father the vice-bishop. The same year, Dimba started his own church. He kept the sabbathical doctrine, hence the name of Zion Sabbath Church. Medical treatment is allowed, but the leaders expect anyone ailing to first consult them and tackle the infirmity spiritually.

New Jerusalem Zion Church (19) – Bishop Sporo Saguga – 1982

Sporo Saguga was born in 1931 at Jordan village, chief Ganyu, Ntcheu, of Maseko Ngoni descent.¹⁷⁵ He, too, left as a young man to South Africa and Zimbabwe and came into contact with the Zionists there. Although attracted to their colourful dresses and dancing, Saguga did not join them but remained faithful to his original church, the Africa Evangelical Church. He married in 1953. He and his wife Liwiza have eleven children; five of them have survived on this earth. In 1982, Saguga got into trouble with a relative who was selling family land to people not related to the clan. This



happened more and more and the family was about to be left without land if this relative could have had his way. Saguga passionately fought for the land. Some leaders from his church misinterpreted this quarrel. They thought Saguga wanted to usurp the family leadership. They first cautioned him to stop and eventually had him excommunicated from the Africa Evangelical Church.

A year later, 1983, Saguga (pictured with his wife in 2003) started praying on his own. Another family joined them the second Sunday,

¹⁷⁵ Int. Bishop Sporo and Mrs Liwiza Saguga, Jordan village, 6.3.2008.

twenty people sought their company the following Sunday and so on. In 2008, the church has about 3,000 members, which gather in the southern and central region of Malawi and in the Angonia Province of Mozambique. Saguga carries the title Senior Bishop. Headquarters are still at his birthplace, Jordan village at Bwanje. The congregations bear all hallmarks of Zionism, except that they baptize infants by threefold immersion, like the Apostoli Zion Church (17). Members are allowed to seek biomedical treatment and Saguga credits the growth of the church to this permission.

Zion Sabbath Kenani Church (20) – Bishop Samson Chirikumbuyo – 1984

This might yet be the smallest Zionist denomination in the country. Bishop Samson Chirikumbuyo oversees a flock of thirteen members, which gather in two classes, at Bwanje and neighbouring Chawanje, Ntcheu. Chirikumbuyo shares the leadership with his son MacDonald.¹⁷⁶

Samson Chirikumbuyo was born in 1954 at Kachinjika village, chief Ganya, Ntcheu. He started out as a member of the Thamanda church,¹⁷⁷ but the *machona* experience in South Africa proved to be a spiritual watershed for him, too. He joined the Christian Apostolic Sabbath Church (13) of Bishop Magagula after his return to Malawi. The local congregation was under Bishop Symon Chimpango's leadership. Over time, Chirikumbuyo also became a leader, but this produced friction between him and Chimpango. Issues between the two were, for example, whether believers should take off their shoes during worship or if members are allowed to plant tobacco. In 1984, Chirikumbuyo decided to jump ship and start his own denomination. He chose the name "Kenani" to further distinguish his group from the beehive of Zionist churches in the area. "Kenani" is Chichewa for "Canaan," the Promised Land.

¹⁷⁶ Int. Bishop Samson Chirikumbuyo, Bwanje, 12.1.2005.

¹⁷⁷ Rodrick Kajamu, *History of Thamanda Seventh-Day Church*, Zomba: Kachere, Kachere Documents no. 21, 2006.

Sinai Zion Church (21) – Bishop Alstone Yohane Kaleke – 1986

Kaleke was born of Ngoni parents in 1949, who worshipped in the CCACZ in Lilongwe.¹⁷⁸ He was an only and long awaited child, and there had been a prophecy about his future ministry before he was born. He could only finish his primary education, after that he had to make a living as a fish fryer. He got married in 1969 and five children were born to the marriage. Kaleke wandered through a number



of denominations before he finally established his own in 1986. He discontinued with the CCACZ as he found the prohibition to seek traditional and biomedical treatment too harsh. He then joined the Entopia Zion Church (14), led by bishop Kanjere. Kaleke quickly rose through the ranks of the church, until he was almost par with Kanjere himself, and this sparked the split between them. Next stop was the Apositoli Zion Church (16) of Naidze Kamwana. Kaleke attached himself to the congregation at Thanganyika village, Kuntaja, but he and Kamwana had been mutually suspicious of each other right after the former's arrival. So, in 1986, Alstone Yohane Kaleke walked out of the church. We have reason to believe that a good number of members went with him, and he founded the first congregation of Sinai Zion Church at Thanganyika village. The founder and his members convened a special meeting in which they ceremoniously opted for the name 'Sinai.' It expresses their wish to be a law-abiding church. Since then, the church has grown well

¹⁷⁸ Int. Bishop Kuchilowa Kalombola, Kalombola village, chief Kuntaja, 13.4.2004, 22.4.2005.

with classes in Mangochi, Dedza and Salima districts. They are represented in Ntcheu, too, (Bwanje), but the headquarters have moved to Chileka. They estimate to have around 5,000 members (internal census



from 2003), who gather in 30 classes under the care of 40 *alevi*. Kaleke allowed his members to seek medical treatment and to visit the *sing'anga*, too. Healings happened under his ministry, although he was a sick healer, suffering from diabetes most of his life. He eventually succumbed to it in 2003 and was buried at Thanganyika village.

Kachilowa Kalombola (pictured with his wife) was a Ngoni chief at Kalombola village, Kuntaja. He was installed as village headman

in 1988 after the death of his uncle. However, Kalombola's spiritual leader, Bishop Kanjere of Entopia Zion Church, did not agree with a member of his church functioning in 'secular' politics. He had the fresh chief excommunicated. Kalombola found a new spiritual home at Sinai Zion, where Kaleke received him with open arms. Before he died, Kaleke wished for Kalombola to become his successor and even told his children not to contest for the top job. The founder's wish was confirmed by a general meeting and since then Kalombola had been called *General Mlevi*. It is sad to say that Kalombola, too, passed away shortly before this writing, in 2007. I will remember the two days spent with him and his warm personality, full of wit and never far from cracking a joke. His dual role as a bishop in Zion and traditional chief will still interest us in chapter 6. Kalombola's successor has not yet been found while penning this down.

Zion Sabbath Church by Manong'a (22) – Bishop Rafold Manong'a – 1986

This small denomination is only present with two classes in the country, at Ntcheu, Delela village, chief Ganya and at Mangochi.¹⁷⁹ Rafold Manong'a, a Ngoni born in 1964 at the same village, broke away from the Zion Sabbath Church (15) led by Bishop Dimba. This happened in 1986 on grounds of personal acrimonies between the two leaders. There are three *alevi* who oversee close to 200 members. The church's doctrine is Zionist, but they allow their members to seek biomedical treatment and go to herbalists, too. As their name says, they worship on Saturdays.

Zion Sabbath Church by Kagwati Phiri (23) – Bishop Kagwati Phiri – 1986

The bishop was born in 1951 in Blantyre, but his original home is Bwanje and his ethnic background Ngoni, of course. In 1986, he walked out of the Christian Apostolic Sabbath Church in Zion (13) which, at that time, was led by Bishop Chimpango at Bwanje.¹⁸⁰ The two could not see eye to eye over several issues. Some of it reads like a hair-in-the-beer incident, so the true reason for the split must have been leadership aspiration. Phiri wanted more decorations on the robes, which were refused. He used his staff to touch the sick while praying over them, a technique Chimpango did not allow.

Kagwati Phiri is still the bishop over his flock, on weekdays he makes his living as a small scale farmer. There is only one class at Ching'amba village, chief Ganya, Ntcheu, 25 people count themselves to this church. What differentiates them from classic Zionist tenets is their liberty to visit hospitals and herbalists, members are allowed to plant tobacco and that they worship on Saturdays.

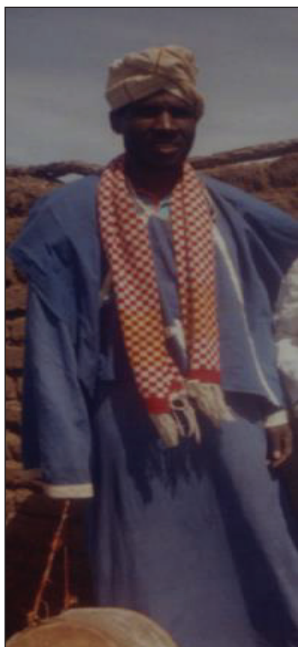
¹⁷⁹ Int. Mr. Kaelama, Bwanje, 4.8 2004.

¹⁸⁰ Int. Bishop Kawerama Belson Dimba, Entopia Zion Church, Chikadya village, Ntcheu, 12.1.2005.

Zion Sabbath Church by Ndau (24) – Bishop Ndau – 1989

Another split from the Zion Sabbath Church (18) led by bishop Dimba occurred in 1989, when Mr. Ndau decided to set up shop.¹⁸¹ Little is known about Ndau, only that he stems from Pendanyama village in Ntcheu and is Ngoni by origin. There is a church at Bwanje, but the bishop and headquarters have moved to Mtendere village, chief Chimwala, Mangochi. Altogether, 45 members are affiliated with this church. They are sabbathical and allow their members to go to hospitals and traditional herbalists. (Ndau should not be confused with Bishop Ndau of the Ufumu wa Yehova ndi Mikaeli).

Samaria Zion Church (25) – General Mlevi Nikisoni Zalengela Chawango - 1990



Nikisoni or Nixon Zalengela Chawango was born in 1962 at Chimgwalu village, chief Kwataine, Ntcheu.¹⁸² He is Ngoni and joined the CCACZ in 1981. He was quite happy with his church, but they put him under discipline in 1988. What had happened was that another member of the CCACZ had burned herself with boiling water. The sister was in terrible pain and it looked as if she would die there at Manjawira. Zalengela, (here pictured in January 2008) who happened to be close by, acted like necessity knows no law and brought the woman to hospital. She was attended to and later released. This incident did not please the elders of the CCACZ. They suspended both Zalengela and the woman from church membership. Zalengela temporarily lost his joy in religion and did not

¹⁸¹ Int. Mr. Kaelama, Bwanje, 4.8.2004.

¹⁸² Int. General Mlevi Nixon Zalengela Chawango, Manjawira, 23.1.2004.

attend any church for two years. During that time, his neighbours began to call him *Msamariya wachifundo*, the Good Samaritan, because he had shown compassion for the woman. In 1990, he felt that the time was ripe to start his own church, naturally called Samaria Zion Church. Many CCACZ members from the Manjawira area followed Zalengela. The church allows its members to visit the *sing'anga*, yet a line is drawn between those herbalists and diviners, which might be hard to define from case to case.

In 2004, the church had 135 baptized members. They gather in seven classes, all around Manjawira up to Buleya, toward Balaka, where the largest class can be found. Zalengela became too busy with his grocery shop at the trading centre and therefore renounced the bishop's title to *Mlevi* Chinangwa, a unique step in Malawian Zionism. Zalengela himself enrolled at the International Bible College Berea in Ndirande, Blantyre, in 2008. He is, to my knowledge, the first denominational leader of a Zionist church to receive theological training at a Pentecostal institute.

New Bible Zion Church (26) – Bishop Stanford John Dunga – 1994

New Bible Zion Church is another small church which, in this case, came out of a family feud.¹⁸³ Setifiketi Kanjere, the founder of Entopia Zion Church (14), took a wife from Bangula, Nsanje. The couple had five boys and two girls. Her brother, S. J. Dunga, a Sena by birth, followed his sister to Mwansambo village at Chileka and used to pray with Entopia Zion there. Kanjere's wife passed away in 1979. In 1994, Dunga decided to break away from Kanjere. He founded his own class at Mwansambo with a following of about 20 members. This information was given by Archbishop Kanjere himself. It is only one side of the story. Dunga and his wife seemed to have moved to South Africa at the time of this writing.

¹⁸³ Int. Bishop Setifiketi Kanjere, Mwansambo village, 5.3.2004.

Apositoli Zion Sabbath Church (27) – Bishop Gresan Abraham Kamwendo – 1998

In 1964, Gresan Kamwendo witnessed the healing of his father under the ministry of a certain elder by the name of Maguja.¹⁸⁴ The father had chronic stomach problems and had undergone four different operations at Queen Elisabeth Hospital in Blantyre before being prayed over. Maguja was a leader in the CCACZ and the miraculous healing happened at the church's class in Ndirande, Blantyre. Gresan was only eight years old at that time, but the miracle made such a profound impression on him that he became a Zionist and stayed with the CCACZ for more than thirty years. In his youth, he received a good basic education at Henry Henderson Institute in Blantyre. After that, he worked for some years at a weaving factory, David Whitehead and Sons. Kamwendo started a small grocery business in 1977 and still makes his living as a tomato seller at Msika wa Njala (Hunger Market) in Ndirande at the time of this writing. In the CCACZ, he rose through the ranks and became an elder, but things were about to change in 1998.

That year, Kamwendo received a mysterious visitor. To Kamwendo, the man looked like a lunatic, but he claimed to have been sent by God. The stranger demanded Kamwendo to change from Sunday to Saturday in his worship. Then he asked Kamwendo to pray over him, apparently with immediate healing results. Lastly, the stranger asked Kamwendo to baptize him in a nearby pond, which he did. The freshly inaugurated baptiser related this whole incident to the CCACZ elders, but met little enthusiasm. Especially sabbathism was a step too far for them. Kamwendo then left the church and founded his own class by the apt name of Apositoli Zion Sabbath Church. His family followed suit and the stranger, a man by the name of William Somanje, was with them for the first two years. The church has not grown much; only fifty souls count themselves loyal to it. They gather in Manase, Blantyre; and in the Lower Shire: Mapelera, Nchalo and Chapananga. Their main prophet,

¹⁸⁴ Int. Bishop Gresan Kamwendo, Ndirande, 12.11.2003.

Malakanda, stays in Chapananga. The fact that Kamwendo is not Ngoni, but Yao helps to explain the absence of this Zionist church from Ntcheu.

Entopia Zion City Church (28) – Senior Bishop Fraction Msalawatha Ngwenyama – 1999

This is the church that came out of Entopia Zion Church (9) in 1999 when polygamy was declared permissible.¹⁸⁵ The founder of Entopia Zion, Mathew Sailaisi Msalawatha Ngwenyama, had two surviving children, Mrs. Rute Mphepo Masina and Fraction Msalawatha. The bishop passed away in 1988 and the leadership fell to his daughter and son. Rute's son, Exton Herbert one day took an additional wife, which caused the leading committee of the church to discipline him. This did not go down well with his mother, but her brother Fraction condemned his



polygamy, too. Rute got to keep the church, but most members left with Fraction in 1999. Therefore, although it was started less than ten years ago, about 10,000 members pray in 155 classes at Mwanza, Blantyre, Phalombe, Balaka and in Ntcheu at Msakambewa. Headquarters are at Ngwenyama village, Mg'ona Azungu Mission, Chief S. Likongwe, Neno. The church is led by three bishops, 42 *alevi* and 60 pastors.

Fraction Msalawatha, pictured here with his wife, carries the title Senior Bishop. He was born in 1939 of Ngoni parents and, congruent with

¹⁸⁵ Int. Bishop S.F. Msalawatha, Mbemba, Neno, 13.5.2004.

his father's biography, grew up in the CCACZ and later in the Entopia Zion Church. He used to work as a post office clerk, later at ADMARC, Malawi's Agricultural Development and Marketing Cooperation, and was appointed as Court Chairperson at Lisungwi Traditional Court at Changa. He retired in 1979 and makes a living from small scale farming.

Chipulumutso Zion Church (29) – Bishop Square Binosi Kasuzo Phiri – 2000

Kasuzo Phiri was born into a Ngoni family in 1943 at Nzangaya village, Njolomole, Ntcheu.¹⁸⁶ He was a member of the Church of Christ. After his wedding he began to go to the CCACZ where his wife prayed. In search of work, he left for Chilimoni, Blantyre, where he attended the African Assemblies of God led by Chitakata. He rejoined the CCACZ after he had moved back to Ntcheu, but for some family reasons he felt too troubled in the church. There followed a short interplay with the Mpingo wa Atumwi led by Masina. Phiri states that dreams and visions moved him to found his own denomination in the year 2000. He saw how people perished, how they did not find true salvation in all the churches that he had been a part of. Therefore, the new denomination is called Chipulumutso – salvation. They are, like all Zionists, strong proponents of faith healing, yet they allow their members to seek biomedical treatment. All are strongly cautioned against divination (kuombedza maula – kupenduza). They have about 500 members who gather in five classes at T/A Kwaitaine, there in the villages of Kamwendo and Mastamale and at Kadzombe, chief Njolomole, all in Ntcheu district.

Zion Church (30) – National General Secretary Eston Thomas Mlangeni – 2004

This is the last church in this list and therefore the most recent ecclesiastic expression of Zionism in this country.¹⁸⁷ It is still so young that its name might still change and become more distinctive in future. The Zion Church is not so much a new church, but a schism from the CCACZ. This happened in 2004 when huge chunks of the CCACZ in southern

¹⁸⁶ Int. Bishop S.B. Kasuzo Phiri and Harry Patson Phiri, Dombale, 1.3.2006.

¹⁸⁷ Int. National General Secretary Eston T. Mlangeni and Mrs. Mlangeni, Ndirande, 7.9.2006.

Malawi broke away from the headquarters in Ntcheu. Our informants talk of 8000 people who left the mother church. Branches can be found in Blantyre: Ndirande, Chirimba, Machinjiri, Lunzu, Mpemba, Chileka, Maleule, Mpachika, Chigodi and Kachere. Thyolo: Mbandanga and Machuana. Chikhwawa: Kabayi and Chimwaza. Zomba: Mpondabwino and Chinsewu. Phalombe: Kamwendo (Mkolong'onjo). Mulanje: Showground.

I have already described that Dowie's church in Illinois went through a series of splits and dogmatic changes. One of its modern offsprings is the Christ Community Church, which is nowadays mainstream evangelical.¹⁸⁸ Yet the church has accepted its rather stormy heritage and sees a responsibility, too. Pastor Greg Seghers and his family are in fact sent from the Christ Community Church in Zion, Illinois, and Grace Missionary Church, also in Zion, Illinois, to South Africa.¹⁸⁹ Seghers has since 1993 faced the mammoth task of bringing the African offspring of his church into some kind of evangelicalism, thus repeating the development that the church in the USA has gone through. The organisation, under which umbrella the Seghers work in South Africa, is aptly called ZEMA, Zion Evangelical Ministries of Africa. ZEMA sees the Zionists in Africa as their mission field, claiming that God has given them an open door among the 15 million adherents in southern African countries.¹⁹⁰

Seghers' mission includes annual visits to Malawi. Because of the home address, Dowie's Zion and all the nostalgia attached, Seghers enjoys open doors in many Malawian churches. He visits Ng'ombe's Zion ya bata (2), different groups in Ntcheu and in the south of the country. Seghers' Malawian tour guide used to be *Mlevi* Chikopa, a bus driver by profession and one of the leaders of the CCACZ in Blantyre. He was Lomwe by origin and came from Chiradzulo. Others who were willing to receive the missionaries were Bishop John Dambo from Ntcheu, Bishop Velemu from Lilongwe and Bishop Banda from Mchengautuwa in Mzuzu. However,

¹⁸⁸ <http://www.ccczion.org/missions/missions.htm> (4.4.2008)

¹⁸⁹ <http://gmczion.org/page.aspx?id=9> (4.4.2008)

¹⁹⁰ <http://www.zema.org> (5.4.2008).

some leaders in the CCACZ were not so keen to work with the foreigners; most of those who opposed cooperation came from Ntcheu. The differences between the two fractions became more pronounced over the years. Already in the 1990s, the white-friendly group opted for an addition to their name, *Zion City ya Azungu*. In Ntcheu, the CCACZ is referred to as “our city” by its members. *Azungu* is the plural of the Chichewa word *mzungu*. This noun would mean someone who surrounds us, if derived from the verb *kuzungulira*. Those surrounding us are strangers and, what it ultimately came to mean, the white people. They want to be the Zionists of or with the white men.

The actual schism happened in 2004. Chikopa had already been given the title General Secretary. He passed away that year and the leaders of Zion City ya Azungu chose his son-in-law, Eston Thomas Mlangeni as his successor. CCACZ headquarters in Ntcheu were hardly consulted. This outraged the leaders and they even sent letters of complaint to those they did not want to work with at all – the white Zionists in South Africa. The same year, 2004, the Zion City ya Azungu decided to rename itself as Zion Church. In 2006, the church was led by Mlangeni, with support from Bishop Khombedza in Lunzu, Vice Bishop Kanthiti from Machinjiri, General *Mlevi* Malunga from Chirimba, General *Mlevi* Nyengere from Thyolo and General *Mlevi* Mtukula from Phalombe.

Bishop Mlangeni was born in 1970 of Ngoni parents at Ntcheu. He had formerly been a member of the Abraham Church and had been a Seventh-day Adventist, too. He entered Zionism by marriage to Chikopa’s daughter in 1999. He was involved with the Chipiliro Church (12) for some time, but dedicated himself to the church of his father-in-law as time went on. Mlangeni resides in Ndirande, Blantyre and makes a living from running a private nursery school.

a. *Developments: Personal Aspirations and the Centre does not Hold*

...the national genius for discord manifested itself at once.¹⁹¹

Local, regional and national authority is the bone of contention during this era. The third generation of Zionism strikes one as an ever fissiparous movement. Whatever the doctrinal scapegoat, some churches came about because of personal aspirations. A good number of churches in the country are run like little enterprises, as a visit to one of Ndirande's many neo-pentecostal backyard congregations will show. This kind of development has not halted in front of Zion's gates.

How important the issue of apparel can become is showcased in the Mpingo wa Atumwi (17). The original reasons for the birth of this denomination were local leadership quarrels and polygamy. However, in Chilomoni, Blantyre, some followers of the Akapolo a Yesu Church (Slaves of Jesus Church) so much protested against the introduction of cassocks and the permission to wear shoes during worship that they left their fellow slaves to become apostles; joining the Mpingo wa Atumwi (Church of the Apostles), which J.J. Masina had founded back in 1974.¹⁹² The branch in Chilomoni grew steadily under the leadership of W. Paulosi.¹⁹³

On the healing controversy, the CCACZ has to this day not given in to what seems a popular demand and still judges those whose refuge is not solely in prayer. Their unrelenting stand caused further breakaways during this period. Interestingly, the last split from 2004 was over the issue of cooperation with missionaries, but the new Zion Church immediately adopted a reformed healing theology: sick members are allowed to go to hospitals for medical treatment.¹⁹⁴ In addition, the

¹⁹¹ Donald R. Morris, *The Washing of the Spears*, London: Pimlico, 1994, p. 153.

¹⁹² Joseph C. Chakanza, *An Annotated List of African Instituted Church 1900 – 1981*, Zomba: Sources for the Study of Religion in Malawi, no. 10, 1983, see churches nos. 31 and 35. Paulosi was the founder of the local church in Chilomoni, Masina was the national founder.

¹⁹³ Int. Mr. Ngwimbi (member of Mpingo wa Atumwi), Zomba Central Hospital, 20.6.2004.

¹⁹⁴ Int. National General Secretary Eston T. Mlangeni and Mrs. Mlangeni, Ndirande, 7.9.2006.

schism of 2004 highlights the center's weakening grip over its periphery. In 1953, the CCACZ lost its northern churches because of ethical and doctrinal issues linked to polygamy. It was, however, already at that time clear that the physical distance between Ntcheu and Mzimba was too big to run a church efficiently. Such means like cars, motorbikes, telephones and bank accounts (with the possibility of foreign transfers), always the prerogative of missionaries in the country, were out of reach to the Zionists. Fifty years later, the CCACZ is further weakened and Ntcheu, as a centre, does not hold. To be precise: the centre still holds, but the peripheries are increasingly falling away. Their unyielding stand on the healing issue has certainly not helped. The split is almost complete, the Zion Church (30) has made deep inroads into CCACZ territories and I bet that Mlangeni's classes will permanently be established in the south and central region of Malawi. Another concern to the CCACZ leaders, the younger leaders, is theological education. Some of them told me to really want some form of Bible training in order to be better equipped for the ministry. It seems the older generation cannot be won over and will not yet allow their younger colleagues to go to a training institute. I can foresee more conflict in this area.

Another major test to the churches is leadership transition. The first two generations seemed to have produced more charismatic leaders than the current one. The strong pioneers were no doubt molded by their *machona* experiences, whereas the leaders of the third generation are not *machona* any longer; most of them grew up within local Zionism. Churches can either be led by a charismatic figure or by an administrative apparatus. The problem with some denominations under survey is that their strong leadership personalities are gone, yet no sufficient administrative apparatus is in place. It has been stated how the CCACZ lost its periphery. Yet the same is true for other, smaller denominations. Some of the younger bishops from Chileka only hold sway over their local congregations.

As such, over a period of more than eighty years, we can witness the spread but also the partial demise of the CCACZ in Malawi. Compared to

its former strength, the church is down, but not out. It will remain a Zion fortress around Ntcheu and among the Ngoni.

b. Summary

The world of Malawians living in the beginning of the 20th century became increasingly disenchanted. Influences of education, science, urbanization and industrialized labour are known to rid religion of its mystery and strip it of its “plausibility.”¹⁹⁵ However, this does not automatically mean that people are less religious; neither could such an assumption be proven empirically.¹⁹⁶ On the contrary, the success of Zionism in Malawi must be understood as a counter force against secularization.

Until 1948, there were only six Zionist denominations in the country. They had to a good degree won the hearts of many Ngoni with a faith that was able to fill the cultural and spiritual void, which the decline of the Ngoni had created. From there, Zionism branched out and made wide inroads into other ethnic territories in the country. Other Ngoni not from Ntcheu were reached, as were other ethnic identities. This happened bar any means from foreigners, missionaries and overseas funds. The random resettlement of the *machona* led to almost nationwide coverage of potential Zionist “dioceses.”

By the end of our story, 2010, Zionism has been partitioned into 30 denominations. Only four of them have come to the country from abroad (CCACZ [1], Holy Apostolic Church in Zion [2], Zion Christian Church [8] and the Christian Apostolic Sabbath Church [13]), all others are the result of some kind of separation within Malawian Zionism. The movement has become a quilt. This kind of patchwork has its weaknesses and strengths. There is a lot of variety and local colouring, yet the Zionists have lost the ability to speak and to present themselves as one. Three different

¹⁹⁵ Sharon K. Houseknecht, Jerry G. Pankhurst, eds., *Family, Religion and Social Change in Diverse Societies*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 15.

¹⁹⁶ José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 6. In: Sharon K. Houseknecht, Jerry G. Pankhurst, eds., *Family, Religion and Social Change in Diverse Societies*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 16.

patterns of separatism can be discovered within Zionism: schism, split and dissent.

What happened to the CCACZ in 2004 is a *schism*, when a huge chunk of the denomination decided to 'modernize', especially in the healing question, resulting in the formation of the Zion Church (30). A schism, then, has less ethnic than doctrinal issues; does not depend on the recruitment of outsiders, but for the existing Zionists to be won over to the new thinking and, eventually, proves to be one of the major means by which Zionism in this country evolves theologically. In retrospect, the unrelenting stand of the Ng'ombe's Zion Church (2) to remain *bata*, while most denominations adopted drums, must be seen as a schism, too.

A *split* is separation on a smaller scale. Examples have shown that it is less doctrinal in nature, but fuelled by individual aspirations; see the Zion Sabbath Churches nos. 22, 23 and 24. Splits happen when budding leadership skills are not promoted, when leaders become out of touch with their subordinates and when individuals cannot be satisfied until they have climbed to the top of the ecclesiastic ladder. Some problems could not be solved within churches, e.g. the hotly debated issue of Kalombola's political office, which resulted in him joining and eventually leading the Sinai Zion Church (21). Unreconciled feuds within the leading family have led to the franchising of churches; see Msalawatha Ngwenyamas' churches nos. 9 and 28. The ethical card has been played, too, but I wonder if this was more a pretense than a cause. Fact is, however, that the sheer distances and language differences have led to alienation between birds of the same denominational feather. These are not yet sufficient grounds for a split, but add some spice to it, for example the polygamy issue, and we quickly find a northern Ngoni Zionist church (Zion Christian Prophecy Church, [11]). There are a good number of denominations, where a doctrinal issue (healing) and personal aspirations worked hand in hand to sever the ties from the mother church. The split in 1951, when the Entopia Zion Church (9) developed out of the CCACZ, is but the first that fits this pattern.

Dissent is a form of separation when someone with a non-Zionist background establishes or eventually leads a Zionist denomination. The

first dissenters were Adiyele Katsichi (4) and Herbert Kakhobwe (7), who came from a Dutch Reformed and a Pentecostal background respectively. Another example for dissent is Bishop Sporo Saguga (19) who stems from the African Evangelical Church. Zionism, however, does not generate in vacuum. All dissenters had had some form of exposure to Zionism before they decided to become one. Zionism proves to have its own attractiveness to worshippers of other churches. Satifiketi Kanjere's former church did not allow him to be a sabbathist with Zionist traits, so he became a Zionist (14) with sabbathist tenets.

Until the 1950s, Zionism was a niche, offering the only available opportunity of worship to people of such liking. This more or less monolithic block has been fragmented. Other alternatives have developed. Within Zionism, sabbathism, polygamy, healing with or without medical aid, dancing, silence, costuming and other varieties have emerged. Outside of Zionism, yet close to the rural religious market place are further alternatives. On the left are the *Vapostoli* churches, which appeal to believers with either more traditional or excessive liking; on the right are the Pentecostal churches with their urban appeal, praying with shoes on in an unbearded spirituality.

Certain trends are visible within the conglomerate of Zionism in Malawi. For one, Zion is *malingaka*, dancing and drumming are all the more welcome. The last *bata* denomination was birthed in 1974, the Mpingo wa Atumwi (17), and even they are not as strictly noiseless as the earlier *bata* churches. Furthermore, as history shows, any new Zionist church in Malawi is likely to allow its members to seek medical help from all corners. Churches with exclusive faith healing are still numerous, but the trend is towards a more relaxed and pragmatic medical assistance. The CCACZ's rigidity has not helped it, at least when evaluated according to membership figures. Original Zionism, with the prohibition to seek bio-medical help, is not any longer appealing to the majority of Malawian Christians, even in the rural areas.

Zionism in Malawi is not polygamous by definition. Not one denomination has officially allowed *mitala* (polygamy) since its inception.

There are but a few churches that tolerate it and when it so happened, not by popular demand, but by their leaders' self-assigned liberty.

Doctrinal mobility has certainly enabled Zionism to accommodate people, who otherwise would have gone (back) to e.g. the SDA churches. Nevertheless, even the ability to change through diversification has not saved Zionism in Malawi from decreasing. They have had their heyday during the second generation, in the 1960s. This was after the churches had been established in their identity, yet before the transition from *machona* to non-*machona* leadership. In this new millennium, either by counting their total numbers, local classes or percentage of Zionists within the overall population, Zionism is on the decline. This decline is in line with similar investigations from West Africa.¹⁹⁷ More analysis will follow in the last chapter.

¹⁹⁷ Cephas N. Omenyo, "Essential Aspects of African Ecclesiology: The Case of the African Independent Churches", *Pneuma*, Cleveland: Society for Pentecostal Studies, vol. 22, no. 2, 2000, p. 234.

4. Identity: What Constitutes Zionism

“...fetal horses...may gallop in the womb.”¹

Being Zionist finds its preeminent expression during their meetings. This comes as no surprise to a ‘spirit church.’ Zionists are socially compounded mystics. What distinguishes them is a spiritual event, experienced in corporate worship. The Zionist service is a tremendous dramatization of an inner spirituality and worldview. It is packed with rites and performances and it employs an array of symbols. In Malawi, four basic ingredients belong to a Zionist service.² They are, in order of appearance: apparel, music, preaching and healing. These four features are not just important by themselves. They constitute identity because they are unique to Zionism if compared to any other Christian grouping in the country. They dress, sing, preach and heal like no one else in Malawi. In regard to the spiritual field, the clothing signals it, the singing and drumming lead into it, the preaching declares it and, eventually, faith healing reaps from it.

1. Apparel and Appearance

Apart from the Sabbath Zion churches, all worshippers meet on a Sunday afternoon, usually at 2pm. This timing has ritual significance, which is further explained under healing in this chapter. Before the meeting, however, Zionists are already busy in anticipation of the event. All Zionist denominations in Malawi use robes or uniforms during worship, and those will have been meticulously prepared before the meeting commences.

¹ Oliver Sacks, *Musicophilia*, London: Picador, 2007, p. 207.

² Kiernan has observed different constitutional elements in South African Zionists’ meetings. James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990, ch. 3.

a. Origin and Variety of Garments and other Gear

It was John Alexander Dowie who put on robes as Elijah the Restorer and, in another fashion, as the Jewish High Priest. His style, transmitted through photographs and the magazine *Leaves of Healing*, found willing imitators on this continent. African cults and religions had had a rich ornamental history long before the first representatives from Illinois hit these shores. Moreover, one could make a case for white robes being an almost universal symbol.³ However, Zionist attire hardly blends with traditional outfits. Nothing could demonstrate this better than an academic inaccuracy, which occurred in the hagiography of South Africa's Zionists. Sundkler draws a parallel between the white clothing of traditional diviners (*izingoma*) and the Zionists' wardrobe.⁴ Becken mentions this, too, but omits any reference to J.A. Dowie's robes, thereby ascribing the Zionists' attire solely to traditional sources.⁵ It is possible to see it this way on the surface, especially since white dresses are known to have had special significance in Natal among the Nguni people.⁶ Nevertheless, the impulse for robes and decorations among the Zionists came from Illinois, USA. LeRoux did not make much use of uniforms, but his successor, Daniel Nkonyane, is credited with sanctioning Dowie's style to *all* believers in Zion.⁷

Malawi's spirit mediums, traditional healers and rulers have displayed outfits which are common to these groups in southern Africa. Traditional cults loved to show certain fanciness with their attire, employing all colours across the palette.⁸ The outcome was a sort of carnival-like garb. However, less decoration sometimes says more. The Bimbi, a traditional

³ Communication Peter Crossman, aic_research@yahoogroups.com, 3.3.2008.

⁴ Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, London: Oxford University Press, 1948, p. 213.

⁵ Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 82.

⁶ Axel-Ivar Berglund, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989, p. 45.

⁷ Dawid Venter, ed., *Engaging Modernity*, Westport: Praeger, 2004, pg. 26.

⁸ William C. Willoughby, *The Soul of the Bantu*, Westport: Negro Universities Press, 1970, p. 308.

rainmaker in Ulongwe, Upper Shire Valley, wears only black, for that is the colour of the desired clouds.⁹ It would be very difficult to prove direct links between those traditional outfits and those donned by Malawi's Zionists. The inspiration was certainly in the air, but the *machona* received their main designs from a different source.

Quite a number of Christian churches in Malawi have some form of

dress code or even uniforms. These are usually statements of belonging and membership; they express hierarchy, too. For example, the *Azimayi a Mvano*, (also called *Chigwirizano*) the women's Christian guild, can be found in many denominations, e.g. the Baptists, many Pentecostal denominations and the Reformed churches. More on the male side are outfits, which express the clerical chain of command in the Roman Catholic,



Anglican and related churches. The Salvation Army is dressed according to rank and file along their international codes. There have certainly been elements from those churches which have found their way into the Zionists' wardrobe. The main source, however, for Zionist garb in Malawi is to be found in its *machona* heritage. Often one cannot tell the

⁹ See the cover of James N. Amanze, *African Traditional Religion in Malawi, The Case of the Bimbi Cult*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2002.

difference between Zionists from Malawi and those from South Africa. There is a striking resemblance between the robes, patched on symbols like crosses and stars, ribbons, sashes and cords. Moreover, some of them, see chapter 4, go all the way back to J. A. Dowie. For normal members, plain white robes were the order of the day right from the beginning. Pictures of early South African Zionists at Wakkerstrom show them clad in white garments already in 1904.

In Malawi, the Mpingo wa Atumwi (17) is probably the most unadorned when it comes to clothing. All members wear plain white robes, the women put on white caps. There are no stars or crosses and no other colour than white is allowed. The same with Zion ya bata (2), only that some of their leaders wear plain black robes. This has neither Nguni nor Ngoni background,¹⁰ but is known in other churches in Malawi, e.g. in the Chikumbutso Church among the Tonga in Nkhata Bay.¹¹ However, most Zionists love it colourful. As can be seen on the picture above, members of the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3) are dressed in robes, with capes on top of them. Some of them are clad in multiple layers of capes, which provide special effects when spinning around their own axis during dances. Other capes, in red and adorned with frills, reminded me of a Roman Catholic cardinal's attire. Some leaders of the CCACZ are not wearing robes, but white lab coats; see for example Bishop Mbedza in chapter 3. This bears some resemblance to medical doctors, which is not unwelcome. Male members of the Zion Christian Church (8) do not wear robes but khaki uniforms, with a cut similar to police uniforms. They put on khaki shirts, together with a brown tie. The sisters wear no special outfit in this church. In general, female Zionists are clad with fewer bells and whistles, and in some churches, only the men put on worship gear. Many churches gather at the bishop's residence; and usually there is a

¹⁰ Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 84.

¹¹ Joseph C. Chakanza, *An Annotated List of African Instituted Churches 1900 – 1981*, Zomba: Sources for the Study of Religion in Malawi, no. 10, 1983, church no. 45. Chikumbutso is not a Zionist denomination.

room where all the regalia is kept, including staffs and robes. Other settings call for individual members to bring their gear to each meeting.

Women cover their heads in all Zion churches. Scarfs and other covers often bear distinctive marks of their denomination. Most common is a white hat, folded from a starched scarf, called *duku* in Chinyanja, which for example the sisters from the Zion Sabbath Church (18) wear. Often the *duku* reaches back to the shoulders or even to the waist line, giving the impression of a veil. In many churches the men wear hats, sometimes sewn into a three or four-pointed cap, as is the case in the Sinai Zion Church (21). Their creativity in this realm never failed to surprise me. High hats are in use, too, similar to those worn by bakers in Europe. I have been in a meeting where the junior bishop wore a headgear which looked like a papal tiara, while his fellow brothers had put on caps, which reminded me of coverings used by medieval fools. Head rings can be seen, which might well have old Ngoni warrior origins. Some Zionist men ritually shave their heads (see chapter 6), so the head rings have a practical use as they absorb sweat during the dancing exercises.

Cords are worn around the neck, the waist and crosswise from shoulder to waist. They can come in all thicknesses and colours with red being the preferred choice. The sisters of the Apositoli Zion Church (16) wear a red cord as a belt around the waist. Ribbons are attached to hats, hems and cords. Hats and robes sometimes have embroidered symbols, of which the cross, the star and the sun are most often found. Not so frequently seen are hearts and circles. Inscriptions are mostly in English, just like almost all church names are in English. They proclaim holiness, wish God's blessing to the reader or chase the devil away ('*Choka satana*', 'Get off satan'). All ZCC (8) members attach the five-pointed star on a piece of green silk to their collars. It is not the Star of David, as a Wikipedia author wants us to believe (the Star of David is six-pointed).¹²

Zionists wear their outfit among themselves and only during their meetings. They display their garments at funeral processions, which moves them more into the public limelight as the distance to the

¹² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zion_Christian_Church. 12.11.2008.

graveyard might take them across town. However, ZCC (8) members display their star every day, which makes it easy to identify them in public. Not all believers are dressed in robes, sometimes they just worship in their everyday clothes. Baptisms demand special dresses and there is one Zionist wedding on record (CCACZ near Lumbadzi), where the groom had a trim suit and the bride a full western bridal dress.

b. Prophetically Designed Dresses and their Meaning

“This is central to the difficulties of Christianity today.
It is as if the liturgical signal boxes were manned by
colour-blind signalmen.”¹³

In most churches, dresses and other gear are prophetically designed.¹⁴ Each garment is tailor-made for its owner. Through inspired patterns, the prophet or prophetess always tries to express something in regard to the believer’s personality and spiritual walk. This is done by choice of symbolic colours, cuts and symbols. Other designs, such as the bishop’s staff, have a longer tradition and cannot be created on the spur of a prophetic moment.

The ceremonial fashion for members is initially prescribed by a prophetess in the New Jerusalem Zion Church (10). The bishop or *mlevi* still has to pray over and dedicate the new robe before it can be worn. The members of the Entopia Zion Church (9) not only boast some of the most ornamented robes in this country, they also display a lot of creativity with the designs of their head covers (*zisoti*). Creative tailoring belongs solely to the prophets and prophetesses in the New Zion Church (15). Nobody is allowed to wear anything which has not been designed under their inspiration. Again, in rare cases traditional diviners are known to have requested particular outfits under the guidance of ancestral spirits, but Zion’s fashions have not been handed down from those cults.¹⁵ The prophetic office and the role of custom designed garments through inspiration was already part and parcel of the *machona* faith when it

¹³ Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 44.

¹⁴ Int. *Mtsogoleri* Levison Chisamba, Yacobe Walasi, Lumbadzi, 28.4.2008.

¹⁵ Steven M. Friedson, *Dancing Prophets*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 84.

came to Malawi. Prophets have mostly to do with healing. Their ministry was established very early in Zionism, not yet in Illinois, but later in South Africa while Zion and Pentecost were still walking the same path. I estimate that prophets started designing garments in South Africa not later than 1915. As such, the practice had already been perceived by the Malawian *machona* as an integral part of Zion and was simply continued here, not copied from other cults.

In general, wearing uniform means to put on an additional identity. It would be wrong to speak of a change of identity, for Zionists are very conscious of who they are, whatever the outfit. I know Zionists from everyday life as post officers or watchmen. The change brought about by their garments never fails to impress me. Moreover, I have been in those rooms where the men change before the meeting; the atmosphere was one of joy and expectation. They are going to present themselves before God. There is nothing of that soft evangelical theology, where people are told that they can “come as they are.” Exodus 3:5 best expresses the Zionist view, “*Take your shoes off, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.*” They are sincere and try to prepare themselves well, both their souls and their dresses. The attire is therefore a transformation and at least conveys the wish of a spiritual amplification. To what end? The overall motive behind the symbols is purity. They strive for purity, in their personal lives and in the church, too. For this reason, the symbolism lends itself to be interpreted both theologically and socially. White robes are the clearest signs for purity. Another Biblical hint is the colour’s association with angels. Is this, as Kiernan points out, an attempt to make the Zionist as remote as possible from life, is white even an allusion to the ancestral shades?¹⁶ I doubt this. With Zionists, the further one travels from KwaZulu Natal (or from the anthropologists busy in that area), the more involvement with ancestors is rejected. Daneel already observed such a change in comparison between South African and Zimbabwean

¹⁶ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1990, p. 192.

worshippers.¹⁷ Further north, here in Malawi, no Zionist would ever approve of any contact with ancestors.¹⁸

The robes' length is significant. Add the head cover and we have a worshiper whose appearance has almost wholly been covered. This speaks of the total commitment to their way of life. They apply their faith on every occasion. Their marital, economic, educational and political identity is governed by Zion, as we will see in the chapters to come. Their way of baptizing by total immersion declares it ritually, yet their robes proclaim it every week: dressing as a Zionist signifies an all inclusive existential mode of being.

Red stands for the blood of Christ. It makes the sinner pure, as it washes away all sins. Moreover, Jesus' blood has protective power and will keep the believer untainted. One hardly ever sees a robe which is entirely red, but cords are usually made of that colour. The members of the CCACZ in Chirimba tie red cords around their necks.¹⁹ To them, the colour symbolizes the blood of Christ, which protects. Women who wear red cords like belts around their waists express their wish for purity and protection in that area, like a spiritual chastity belt. Strings and robes of other colours signify binding.²⁰ There is, perhaps a hint of traditional practice here, where strings are tied around babies and people's necks, wrists and hips, in order to ward off evil spirits. The practice is, however, christianized with the Zionists. The cords are prescribed by the prophets and blessed, oftentimes sprinkled with holy water before usage. A Zion minister from Mozambique stated that cords are used to tie evil forces with the Word of God.²¹ Embroidered stars and suns mean that the

¹⁷ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, vol. 2, The Hague: Mouton, 1974, p. 334.

¹⁸ There are religious groupings like that in Malawi, but they are not Zionists. See Joseph C. Chakanza, *An Annotated List of African Instituted Church 1900 – 1981*, Zomba: Sources for the Study of Religion in Malawi, no. 10, 1983, church no. 45.

¹⁹ John Nindi, *Chirimba Christian Apostolic Church in Zion, Its Establishment, Organization and Beliefs*, Zomba: Kachere, 2006, p. 12.

²⁰ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990 p. 113.

²¹ Gerhard Seibert, "But the Manifestation", in: E. Morier-Genoud, D. Péclard, eds., *Le Fait Missionnaire*, Lausanne: UNIL, vol. 17, 2005, p. 145.

believers are to walk in the light.²² Here, purity is understood as transparency. The trademark star of the ZCC (8) adherents has come to stand for holiness, too. Especially for women, the head cover has symbolic intensity. It signifies subordination, both to God and to the order of the church. Zionists are quick to quote Leviticus and Paul on the issue.

Another must is worshiping barefoot; all denominations pray like this. The only exception is the Zion ya bata (2), where some take the liberty to leave their sandals on. Bishop Saguga (19) preached at an *ad hoc* meeting at Chawanje in 2001. He left his suit on, but took the shoes off and put on a turban-like makeshift cover, under God. Taking shoes off carries the Biblical symbolism into Zion's contemporary arenas. The custom stands for the aspired ritual cleanness of the meeting place, where any impurity is to be left outside. Moreover, the individual believer humbles himself, for walking barefoot was distinctive for slaves in ancient Israel and is likewise understood as a marker of poverty in Malawi. It stands for equality, too, as bishops and ordinary members are literally on equal footing. With shoes taken off and all other gear put on, the Zionist believer is ready for the service to begin.

2. Music and Dancing

"The artist and the work are still one and the same thing."²³

a. Times and Patterns of Dances

Zionism is a danced religion. Singing and dancing takes up more time in a Zionist meeting than in any other church group in Malawi. On average 3/5 of a meeting is given to music and moving. I have been in meetings, especially those at nighttime, when 90% of the time was dedicated to singing and dancing. It can happen that Zionists omit the sermon, but they would never forget to dance.

²² Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 81.

²³ Curt Sachs, *World History of the Dance*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1938, p. 38 in: James N. Amanze, *African Traditional Religion in Malawi, The Case of the Bimbi Cult*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2002, p. 53.

On Sundays, the drummers gather before 2 pm and dedicate their instruments to God. Usually services are open air and take place at a rural *bwalo* (Chinyanja for an open gathering place). *As can be seen in the picture*, ardent drummers like members of the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3) gather around drums, staves, trombones and tambourines and pray over them. This is done in most Zion churches that are *malینگaka*. Almost all instruments are of makeshift style. Horns are fashioned from funnels and hoses, guitars can be fabricated from oil canisters; lined up bottle caps make tambourines, other percussion instruments are built from barrels and flat iron sheets. Drums are built the traditional way,



carved from hardwood, mostly *mlombwa*. This, however, is too traditional to the CCACZ and some other denominations. *Mlombwa* is used for drums at possession and ancestral cults; those instruments are called *ng'oma za manganje*. The leaders of the church try to avoid any proximity to those cults. Similar to the design of dresses, instruments can be conceived and created under prophetic inspiration. Drums are sprinkled with holy water

before their first use and decorated with white stripes. In some churches, the dancers drink holy water or tea, to strengthen themselves.²⁴ Although mostly rhythmic, Zionists are able to play melodious tunes on their instruments, which is no mean feat given the instruments' quality and pitch.

Then they start with slow rhythms and specific songs, which summon the people of God. Drums are Zion's belltowers; the start of the meeting can be heard from miles away. Yet there remain onlookers and bystanders. The former are not Zionists, but attend for the sake of curiosity or for the love of music, and can easily number hundreds. The latter are believers, but for different reasons they will not dance today. Some might not join the commotion because of health reasons; others are not allowed to as long as they are under church discipline for sins committed.²⁵ Zionist bystanders are, on average, not more than 20% in comparison to the dancers, for it is expected from ordinary members to join the ruckus and dance. Non-Zionist bystanders can easily outnumber the devoted, especially in the townships. Commotion starts on the first beat, for drumming and dancing are never separated. In general, two basic dance patterns can be distinguished. *Kubonga* is a fast, frolicking dance. *Seji* is slower, more dignified than *kubonga*.²⁶

Kubonga dances are first and foremost circular. Groups of dancers circle around the center of the *bwalo*; often each dancer turns round on his own axis while following the line. They might start outside the *bwalo*, sometimes even hiding behind a house only to form a conga line and rush in. The drummers usually perform their duty in the middle of the circle formed by dancers, at other times they carry the instruments with them, joining the dancers. There seems to be no preference given to direction, circles go clockwise or counterclockwise. It can happen that more than one circle of dancers is formed and they move in opposite directions, like

²⁴ <http://www.folklife.si.edu/resources/Festival1997/faith>. 11.11.2009.

²⁵ Int. *Mlevi* Kaulimbo, CCACZ, Bangwe, 18.10.2006.

²⁶ Interviews Mayi Mpatse, CCZ (8), Makata, Ndirande, 12.10.2006. *Mlevi* Frank Jada, CCACZ, Bangwe, 17.10.2006. *Mlevi* Kaulimbo, CCACZ, Bangwe, 18.10.2006.

wheels turning inside each other. Once I witnessed that the inner ring moved slower; it was therefore the favoured line of elderly worshipers.

Zionists dance with their entire body, no limbs freeze which is, for example, the case with some dances from the British Isles. Here the whole body moves through time and space; the dancers exercise with all that is in them. Yet, we are a church and therefore the hip movements are not pronounced, as can be seen in the tavern down the road. The Apostolic Faith Church (7) in Ntcheu does not allow its members to go to traditional dances. *Ngoma* is forbidden to the men, so is *M'ganda* to the ladies.²⁷ Some of those dances do involve swinging of hips and buttocks. Others have even more sexually seductive moves. All of this the church abhors. In Zion, men and women are dancing together, but never with each other. Zionists do not clasp hands or lock shoulders, as group dancers do in Poland and Greece respectively. Up to five different drummers can be busy during *kubonga*. And it's loud. I remember the first service I attended. The volume had clearly crossed my pain barrier. My ears were ringing and I could feel the banging from my toes right into the roots of my teeth. Whistles, horns, trumpets and tambourines never fail the rhythm, but range from harmony to cacophony on the melodious side.

We might need to mention, that although the Zion Church (2) is *ya bata* and will not use any instruments in their services, yet believers sway to and fro during the singing and are clapping their hands, too.

In general, *kubonga* lasts for two to three hours. It is a very sportive exercise, most dancers are drenched in sweat, and so are the drummers. Participants exhaust themselves as they give it all. One can see elderly members panting after the dances. *Seji* follows *kubonga* seamlessly. The volume is down and worshipers dance more by themselves. No whistles are blown any longer. There is only one drum left, sounding muffled. No hopping about in circles at this point of time, the believers sway little

²⁷ Int. E.G. Zingwa naBengo, Bishop L.Z. Bengo, A. Julius, Dzipirana, Ntcheu, 17, 18. 8. 2005. On the eastern side of the Lake, the dance is known as *ng'anda*. Helen E.P. van Koevering, *Dancing their Dreams. The Lakeshore Nyanja Women of the Anglican Diocese of Niasa*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005, p. 158.

where they are. Or they whirl slowly on the spot, eyes closed. Lyrics from the psalms are the preferred texts during *seji*. Thomas Valpy French, an early missionary to India, observed that, “*The Itsani singers have no ‘outside audience’ other than themselves.*”²⁸ The same is true with Malawi’s Zionists. They emphasize that they dance unto God. Their movements are an act of worship, aiming to please the heavens. During *seji*, individual prayers can be heard, often solemn yet fervent. At the end of it, they all kneel down and pray, marking the end of the dancing. Someone prays out loud to conclude this part of the service. If all goes well, the believer will have entered the spiritual field through the *seji* dance, ready for more encounters with his God. It usually is 16.30 at this point of time. Next in the liturgy will be the sermons.

One dance, which is performed many Sundays, yet does not fit the *kubonga* and *seji* pattern, is a mock dance. The participants mimic drinking, smoking (see picture) and even acts of fornication. At the end of the dance, every “sinner” is down on the ground, his life coming to a miserable end in the gutter. The dance has evangelistic purpose. Observers should learn to abstain from those vices. Yet, on a small scale I was reminded of what Gluckman calls, perhaps mistakenly, *rituals of rebellion*.²⁹

²⁸ Piet Naudé, *The Zionist Christian Church in South Africa*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995, p. 39.

²⁹ Max Gluckman, *Custom and Conflict in Africa*, New York: Barnes and Noble, 1955; cited in E. M. Zuesse, *Ritual Cosmos. The Sanctification of Life in African Religions*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985, p. 121. For further criticisms about Gluckman’s hypothesis, see Edward Norbeck, “African Rituals of Conflict”, *American Anthropology*, n.d., vol. 65, 1903, pp. 1254-79. Thomas O. Beidelmann, “Swazi Royal Ritual”, *Africa*, n.d., vol. 36, 1966, pp. 373-405. “*Much of what Professor Gluckman refers to as ‘rituals of rebellion,’ (nomkumbulwana) at least in the Zulu setting, appears to involve confession rather than rebellion.*” S.G. Lee, “Spirit Possession among the Zulu”. In: John Beattie, John Middleton, eds., *Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa*, New York: African Publishing, 1969, p. 149. See also Berglund, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989, p. 313.

Such mock dances have a long history in cultures all over the world. Fools' festivals are known from medieval Europe.³⁰ Traditional Ngoni society also knew of a time called *chiponde*. It was the period between the death and cremation of the Paramount, a period of debauchery.³¹ In South Africa, there is the Zulu spring festival where the women dress as men and participants are allowed to sing obscene lyrics. Transvestite masquerading is known in the closing ceremony of *jando*, the boys



initiation rite among the Yao.³² In Malawi, I could not find any Zionists church where men were allowed to wear female clothing or vice versa. It would be an abomination to them. When asked about this, some leaders just went into a wail about the youth and how girls in Malawi nowadays put on tight trousers, "*Kamuzu would have never allowed this.*" (The

³⁰ Barbara Tuchmann, *Der ferne Spiegel*, Hamburg: Spiegel Verlag, 2007, p. 53.

³¹ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 72.

³² Brian Morris, *Animals and Ancestors. An Ethnography*, Oxford: Berg, 2000, pp. 127f.

Republic's first president, H.K. Banda, ruled with an iron fist. Dress code was enforced during his era). Are the Zionists' mock dances not only aimed at bystanders? Ritual can serve as an outlet of hidden forces, but in this case it helps the participants to give vent to their feelings towards what is prohibited. They make fun of sinners and at the same time establish themselves as people who have chosen a better life-style. Sin, however, is not tasted by the Zionists. The dance does not give leeway to lewdness. It is therefore not a ritual of rebellion, but primarily an evangelistic tool.

b. Origins and Traditions of Dances

“When we give ourselves completely to the spirit of the dance,
it becomes a prayer”³³

Dance patterns derive mainly from the *machona* heritage of the Zionists, most of them originated outside the country and have been assimilated. Ngoni cultural elements have been incorporated, too.

Zionists have taken over ancient Israel's heritage, which H.W. Turner calls the 'Hebraist' element, which had been mentioned in chapter 1. The Biblical narrative has been accepted as theirs. It projects them as finally standing on the victor's side of history. In addition to other churches, who have taken on Biblical lyrics from psalms or other books, the Zionists see the description of dances and drums as an encouragement to do likewise; much to their African liking. Many Zionists ascribe the origin of their singing to Miriam, Ex. 15:20. *“That is why we Zionists dance and praise our God, for we know that He has done great things in our lives.”*³⁴ Another case for dancing is made by referring to 2 Sam 6:14, when David skipped before the Ark of the Covenant.³⁵ Some of our informants did not want to know about when and through whom drumming was introduced in Malawi. To them, their expression of worship has ever been on a

³³ Gabrielle Roth, <http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Dance>. 19.12.2008.

³⁴ Int. Mayi Mpatse, CCZ (8), Makata, Ndirande, 12.10.2006.

³⁵ Int. *M/levi* Kaulimbo, CCACZ, Bangwe, 18.10.2006.

continuous timeline since Miriam and Moses, it has never changed. They believe, contrary to the facts, that John A. Dowie danced, too.³⁶

Already in Old Testament times, music and dance were inseparable.³⁷ Worship found an early culmination during King David's reign, before the temple and its sacrifices became the centre of Hebrew worship once again. In the Bible, lyrics and rhythms served a three-fold purpose. They were meant to remind Israel of her past, especially her salvific history. Even in the New Testament, Luke has four people sing in his gospel, who give evidence of a rich repertoire of salvation history, which comes into the open in emotional outbursts. Second, music played the role of leading the worshiper into the presence of God. The psalms of ascent, 120-134, are a physical example of this spiritual reality. The worshiper was called upon to leave the chores behind, close shop and turn toward Jerusalem. Climbing up to the holy city meant coming nearer to the Lord. The last psalm of ascent shows the pilgrim at his final destination, his spiritual field: in Zion, in the temple, worshiping in the presence of God.³⁸ Lastly music is hinted at as having therapeutic power, or to be a channel through which God soothes the soul. Some kind of music therapy it must have been when David's play becalmed King Saul's evil spirits; 1. Sam. 16:23. In Psalms, the praises of the people had curative effects on the singers, too. All this is not dancing and drumming as the Zionists know it, but it serves them to vindicate their practice's Biblical birthright.

Out of all this, Zionists obtain their legitimization for dancing. It is their ticket to assert their particular African expression of worship, over and against churches who do not allow such physical movements. Most of those churches are, of course, missionary-controlled, or they have a missionary past. Dancing was forbidden to Africans in Malawi's early

³⁶ Int. *Mlevi* Frank Jada, CCACZ, Bangwe, 17.10.2006 and *Mlevi* Kaulimbo, CCACZ, Bangwe, 18.10.2006.

³⁷ V. Schmidt, "Musik", in: H. Burkhardt, F. Grünzweig, F. Laubach, G. Maier, eds., *Das Grosse Bibellexikon*, Wuppertal: Brockhaus, vol. 2, 1990, p. 998.

³⁸ "Lift up your hand to the sanctuary and bless the LORD. May the LORD bless you from Zion, He who made heaven and earth." Ps 134:2f.

churches. On record is, however, D. C. Scott's approach, which I will quote as an exception to the rule.

Another of Scott's ideas was very far from typical of the Victorian mission station, this was moonlight dancing. On the nights when the moon was full and there was no cloud, Scott had the boarders gather on the bwalo to dance and play games and sing as they would have done at home in the villages on such a night...³⁹

This was, for a long time, the only appearance of dancing in any of the CCAP's synods with official consent. Yet Scott did not let the boys dance in the sanctuary on a Sunday morning. The best we can find is missionary tolerance of Africans dancing, such as by the Anglican bishops on Likoma, but no incorporation or Christianization of any kinesthetic activities. In the north, missionary Elmslie branded the Ngoni dances as "*unintelligible*."⁴⁰ Scott's nearest neighbour in the south, the Zambezi Industrial Mission, banned dancing and then went on to prohibit drumming as evil, too.⁴¹ The Roman Catholic Church nowadays tries hard at *inculturation*.⁴² It is in many cases the effort to win back what had been discarded as heathenish in the missionary past. That history goes both ways can be seen in the fact that the early missionaries to the Nguni in South Africa found the initiation dances for boys and girls rather indecent. However, the same feelings were evoked in the African population when they saw white men and women actually touching each other in the ballroom.⁴³ Because of this, argued Monica Wilson in the 1970s, the one state, where the Nguni still wield some power, Malawi, had officially forbidden ballroom

³⁹ Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996, p. 75.

⁴⁰ Walter A. Elmslie, *Among the Wild Ngoni*, London: Frank Cass, 1970, p. 46.

⁴¹ Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996, p. 75.

⁴² Patrick A. Kalilombe, *Doing Theology at the Grassroots*, Zomba: Kachere, 1999.

⁴³ Anya P. Royce, *The Anthropology of Dance*, Alton: Dance Books, 2002, p. 158.

dancing.⁴⁴ Generally, missionaries in Malawi saw to it that no dancing took place in the churches.⁴⁵

The growing missionary influence among the *machona* Pentecostals in Malawi curbed dancing in those churches, too. This is one reason why a good number of Malawi's Pentecostals (see for example the Apostolic Faith Church [7]) came over to Zion after the World War II, after the denominations had been taken over by missionaries. The attitude of Pentecostals towards dancing has always been ambivalent. In a broad generalization, we defined Pentecostalism as a religion with oral preferences, whereas Zionists are oral *and* visual. Dancing is by definition an oral and visual enterprise, which leaves the Pentecostals in a dilemma. From their black roots, they knew physical expressions.⁴⁶ The slaves in the USA had to a good degree kept their dancing traditions alive, while fusing them at the same time with fitting European and American elements.⁴⁷ Christian slaves danced in worship. They had a counterclockwise dance, known as the '*ring about*,' in which they conversed with their God and reenacted Israel's history. They arrived in the spiritual field by staging the crucifixion in dance.⁴⁸ These kind of dances did not find their place in early US-Pentecostalism. Permitted were such movements which appeared as a spontaneous expression of the Spirit moving upon man, not as a man-made, choreographed symbol. Pentecostals eschew any form of recreational and entertainment dancing, and they never distinguished between them. It smacked too much of 'the world' (secular society),

⁴⁴ Monica Wilson, "The Wedding Cakes: a Study of Ritual Change," in: J. S. Fontaine, ed., *The Interpretation of Ritual*, London: Tavistock, 1972, p. 194.

⁴⁵ George Shepperson, Thomas Price, *Independent African*, Edinburgh: University Press, 1987, p. 159.

⁴⁶ Robert A. Mills, "Musical Prayers: Reflections on the African Roots of Pentecostal Music", *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, Leiden: Brill, vol. 6, no. 12, 1998, pp. 109-126. L.W. Levine, "African Culture and U.S. Slavery, in: Joseph D. Harris, ed., *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, Washington: Howard University, 1982, pp. 131ff.

⁴⁷ L. W. Levine, "African Culture and U.S. Slavery, in: J. D. Harris, ed., *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, Washington: Howard University, 1982, p. 133.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.131ff.

where sexual advances found their legitimized ritual in dancing.⁴⁹ Charismatics, on the other hand, are much freer with dancing and allow it to a greater extent in their services.⁵⁰ What goes on, however, is mainly a phantomimic dance of one or two sisters on stage, who accompany the worship songs with their physical expressions. The way Malawian Zionists dance is unique to them, both their style and the prominence it takes in the services. This heritage has not come to them from any other church in Malawi.

They did glean a little from their cultural heritage, though. Dancing was an expression of dignity among the Ngoni. The dances were the favorite pastime of all Ngoni youth and middle-aged people. It took place on all clear moon lights in their villages.⁵¹ The young people's dancing gave hints about the quality of individual characters to the onlooking elders.⁵² Four dances featured most prominently in Ngoni society, *ligubo*, *incwala*, *ligiya* and *ngoma*. Dance, in this sense, was not simply one dance, but a repertoire of several songs and cultic ceremonies woven into it, so dance can actually mean "*festival*."⁵³ *Ligubo* was held at a time of war. The soldiers wore full combat-dress. Spears and shields were carried and the ground was stomped with billowing clouds of dust. The men danced in circles, women joined too, if not in the movements then at least with the lyrics. *Ligubo* was a confidence booster. Some masked as wild beasts and looked terrifying to the onlookers. After the dance, definite plans about the next attack could be made.⁵⁴ Parts of *ligubo* can be seen among the Zionists at Chileka and Whayo (Lunzu). They would never wear masks, but ground stomping is a fixed feature. The *incwala*

⁴⁹ Frances Bixler, "Dancing in the Spirit", Stanley M. Burgess, Eduard van der Mass, eds., *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002, pp. 570f. Walter J. Hollenweger, "Dancing Documentaries: The Theological and Political Significance of Pentecostal Dancing", in: J. G. Davis, ed., *Worship and Dance*, Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1975, pp. 76-82.

⁵⁰ Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999, p. 102.

⁵¹ Donald Fraser, *Winning a Primitive People*, London: Seeley, 1914, pp. 75f.

⁵² Margaret Read, *Children of their Fathers*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968, p. 80.

⁵³ Landeg White, *Magomero*, Cambridge: University Press, 1987, p. 106.

⁵⁴ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 32.

was a dance performed at the feast of first fruits by the same name. It took place in February when the early harvest could be expected. The manoeuvring called for men and women facing each other, bending their bodies backward and forward.⁵⁵ This custom survived for only a few years after the Ngoni had settled in Malawi, neither have I seen such choreography among the Zionists. Another form which has become extinct is *ligiya*, an individual dance performed by one who had killed a lion or leopard. All informants stated that some elements in the *kubonga* dances were taken over from Ngoni war preparations, especially dance patterns called *ngoma*, (*ingoma* in Chingoni) which is not exclusively Zionist. *Ngoma* is perhaps the best known dance of the Ngoni in contemporary Malawian society. It is good entertainment and can be performed in the stadium before the national football team competes, at grand weddings or prior to the State President's speech. Originally, *ngoma* was performed by the Ngoni regiments⁵⁶ and after the harvest by the youths of the village.⁵⁷ Through *ngoma* and similar to *ligubo*, the warriors predicted total victory over their enemies. In similar fashion, the Zionists of Zion Christian Prophecy Church (11) sing, "*Tiponde, tiponde...Satani.*" (We stomp on, we stomp on... the devil) and the accompanying movements are not hard to imagine. The word *ngoma* itself is used during the Zionist dance, "*Ngoma, ngoma, ngoma eee, ngoma. Tikaiponde ngoma...*" Formerly, the Ngoni men used dancing sticks, now the bishops' staffs double for the purpose.⁵⁸ Ethnomusicologists stress the difference between a martial society's expression in music and that of agriculturalists. This certainly rings true for Malawi. The Ngoni's martial past and culture mixes well with Miriam's triumphant song, Joshua's combat lyrics and David's victory psalms.

Has a Lomwe element crept into Zion's dancing culture? I am not sure. Men of the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3) wear rattles around their ankles, something well known with *tchopa*, a traditional dance of Lomwe

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁵⁶ John A. Barnes, *The Fort Jameson Ngoni*, n. d., p. 215.

⁵⁷ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 22.

⁵⁸ Walter A. Elmslie, *Among the Wild Ngoni*, London: Frank Cass, 1970, p. 46.

origin and nowadays popular throughout Malawi.⁵⁹ I have seen such rattles used by European street musicians, who certainly hadn't copied it from the Lomwe. Zionists have, apart from their Ngoni origin, refused to assimilate elements from any other dancing culture in Malawi. Most of those dances have connections to ancestor veneration, something the Zionists avoid like the plague. Moreover, not every move is loaded with cosmic symbolism, and even if it were so, the dancers might not know about it. I had fed myself with all kinds of information concerning Ngoni dances. One source ascribed special 'spiritual' significance to the direction of the dances. When I asked the Zionists about the deeper meaning between switching from clockwise to anticlockwise movements, the astounding answer was, "We do this to avoid a feeling of dizziness."⁶⁰

This leaves us with the *machona* import as the main source for dance patterns among Malawi's Zionists. And so it is. Etymology gives the first proof, for both words *kubonga* and *seji* are not from any of the country's languages; they stem from the Zulu heartland. *Kubonga* means "to extol, laud, praise" in Izizulu. So much were the dances imported from South Africa that even the terms for them were carried over into Malawi. Neither are drums a Ngoni cultural heritage. As stated before, the Ngoni did not use drums. I will give a more detailed analysis of traditional possession cults in the country when looking at healing, but this much should be said right now: the Zionists did not copy drumming from *vimbuza* or any other cult of affliction. Drumming came into Malawi's Zionism when the *machona* danced their way back home. A look at the Zion Christian Church (8) gives another hint. This denomination is the only remote-controlled Zionist church in Malawi, with Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane having full authority over his Malawian subordinates. The link to South Africa is still so strong that the believers in this country have taken over foreign dance patterns (which also differ from other Zionist denominations in Malawi). For example, men and women move in separate circles. Another exercise, unique to them, helps them to clean

⁵⁹ Joseph C. Chakanza, "The Tchopa Dance: Nature and Performance", P. Gamba, ed., *The Lamp*, no. 67, 9/2007, Balaka: Montfort Media, p. 20.

⁶⁰ Int. Bishop P. E. Makoko (15), Kaluzi, 28.2.2006.

the air by means of a whip. The precentor every now and then whips the air above the singers with a sharp crack, which is accompanied by other gestures of conquering the ground and possessing the land. The whip is a foreign element in Malawi's Zionism, but the strong link to South Africa made it possible to be introduced here. It is therefore probable that other and more basic dance patterns were introduced in a similar way to Malawi. Strongest proof, however, is a direct comparison between South African Zionists and their Malawian brothers. From what I have witnessed, I could not tell the difference between CCACZ members near Randburg (Johannesburg) and in Ntcheu. The languages are different, but outfit and dance patterns are indistinguishable. As the research went on, I came to ponder on one of their statements, although it still has to be taken with a pinch of salt. The leadership of the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3) assured me, without the wink of an eye that *"neither the church nor her doctrines have changed since coming to Malawi."*⁶¹

c. Lyrics

Naudé has studied verbal expressions, hymns in particular, in a South African Zionist church. He then went on and constructed a creed for the church from their lyrics.⁶² I will not repeat his effort with hymns sung by Malawian Zionists. Because the lyrics are not written by them; texts are either from the Bible or from non-Zionist hymnbooks. What can be heard in many services is, for example, Ps. 137:1, in Chinyanja: *"Ku mitsinje ya ku Babulo, kumeneko tinakhala pansi, tinalira mayo, mayo kukumbukira Ziyoni."* What needs to be interpreted here is not the verse, but the Zionists' understanding of it (and in this case, the theme of exile runs through this study).

The Zionists' lyrical repertoire seems orthodox and static, even more so when compared to the Pentecostals and Charismatics. In addition, it is rhythm over lyrics that serves as the real musical mortar, especially on

⁶¹ Int. Mrs. F. Chaluluka, Rev. R. L. Gama, Rev. L. Mbewe, Rev. P. Makanani, Whwayo, 6.11.2005.

⁶² Piet Naudé, *The Zionist Christian Church in South Africa*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995, 137f.

this continent. It may well be that the lines of a certain song catch and express a group's sentiments and convictions, but more often the beat, the swing and clapping are the elements, which make music the social cement that it is. Friedson says the lyrics of songs, especially in anthropological research, have often been overemphasised in comparison with rhythm, which is to him a more important musical issue.⁶³ True. In our case, the literal meaning of the texts, especially during the *kubonga* dances, is clearly of secondary importance to the performers themselves. Sometimes singers can recite countless lines, while having no clue as to their meanings.⁶⁴ This is not to say that texts are not important, but that the role, which texts play in western cultures, is not the same in other civilizations. Dance oftentimes performs the functions of literature in oral cultures.⁶⁵ It teaches, stores information and demands interpretation.

Zion's lyrics can be grouped into two categories. First, during *kubonga*, they sing words or simple one-liners (monostichs), mainly to match the rhythmic pattern. One piece consists of "*Hallelujah*" and "*Aameni*", repeated hundreds of times as one song can easily last up to ten minutes. Other monostichs are, "*Zionists, come,*" "*Repent, come back*" "*The devil is a liar,*" "*The devil has no teeth,*" "*Be careful,*" "*Come, oh Lord,*" "*Israelites, why do you cry? The staff is in your hand.*"⁶⁶ "*Fight the war for me, Lord.*"⁶⁷ It is obvious that the last mentioned monostichs are excerpts from Israel's history. Zionist lyrics do not retell the entire narrative, for example, how the walls of Jericho came down, but the dancing tells it all. One line suffices for the rhythm; the rest is expressed through motions. During the singing, many exclamations and interjections can be heard, *hallelujah* and *ameni* being the favourites. Repeatedly one hears *iwe* (you), especially during moralizing songs. Further rhythmic interjections

⁶³ Steven M. Friedson, *Dancing Prophets*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 130.

⁶⁴ Oliver Sacks, *Musicophilia*, London: Picador, 2007, p. 239.

⁶⁵ A. Snyder in: T. Comstock, ed., *New Dimensions in Dance Research: Anthropology and Dance*, New York: Committee on Research in Dance, 1974, pp. 213f.

⁶⁶ This line is from the New Jerusalem Zion Church (19). Int. *Mlevi* Salatiele Malope, *Mlevi* Francis Nkhoma, M'gona, Lilongwe, 19.8.2007.

⁶⁷ Sung in the Samaria Zion Church (25). Int. General *Mlevi* Niksoni Zalengera Chiwango, Manjawira, 14.10.2008.

are humming sounds like ‘mmmmm’ and the Chinyanja ‘eeeeh’, which doubles as “indeed” and “yes.” In Malawian cultures, the women ululate, which they do rather often during *kubonga*. It is a sign of joy, also respect is paid in this manner. Most songs need the service of a precentor. This caller will use the breaks to insert little comments, remarks and rebukes, while the believers fall in with the one-liner as a chorus. It is believed that this genre of songs has its origin in the fields of Africa, coordinating the rhythm of communal work.⁶⁸ Most songs during *kubonga* are antiphons. One example:

Precentor:	Ana a Ziyoni, ana a Ziyoni, tiyeni tiyimbire
Congregation:	Tiyimbire mwana wa Davide Hossana ⁶⁹
Precentor:	Ana a Ziyoni, ana a Ziyoni, tiyeni tiyimbire
Congregation:	Tiyimbire mwana wa Davide Hossana
All	Hossana, Hossana, Hossana, Hossana, tiyimbire Mwana wa Davide Hossana

Hymns form the second category of songs. The difference between *kubonga* singing and hymn cantillation is as chalk from cheese. They stop cavorting and intone the hymn in a most solemn manner. Yet the precentor is even more needed. He might be the one who owns the hymnbook or it is only him who remembers the lyrics. He calls out the text before each following line is sung. Most Zionist churches share in the wider Christian repertoire of Malawian hymns. Mostly used is the hymnal *Nyimbo za Mulungu* of the CCAP, and, to a lesser extent, *Nyimbo za Chitsitsimutso*, published by the Assemblies of God. The CCACZ uses the CCAP hymnbook, both at Chirimba in Blantyre⁷⁰ and near Lilongwe.⁷¹ One Evangelical classic is “*Pass me not, o gentle Saviour*” by Fanny Crosby.⁷²

⁶⁸ Roger D. Abrahams, ed., *African Folktales*, New York: Pantheon, 2000, p. 5.

⁶⁹ ‘Children of Zion (2x), come let us sing, May we sing Hosanna to the son of David.’ The chorus is well known in Pentecostal churches, too.

⁷⁰ John Nindi, *Chirimba Christian Apostolic Church in Zion, Its Establishment, Organization and Beliefs*, Zomba: Kachere, 2006, p. 9.

⁷¹ Stansfield Kazokoko, “*Malinkaka Church: A Case Study of an Independent Church which Seceded from the CCACZ*”, Zomba: Chancellor College, Department of TRS, 1980, p. 5.

⁷² <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/html/p/a/passment.htm>. 26.11.2008

The Apositoli Zion Church (16) sings it every Sunday in Chinyanja, “*Sandipitilire Yesu, mundimvere ine*” (This is one song which might be recognized by a European or an American ear. Most tunes have been localized beyond recognition.) A real classic among all Zionists is “*Ndipo owomboledwa a Yehova...*,” taken from Isa. 51:11, which expresses the realization of exilic hopes in Zion.⁷³ Two to four hymns are sung in every service. Hymns are used as transitory elements during the meetings, e.g. to switch from *seji* to the sermons. Special occasions, such as funerals, call for specific hymnal repertoire. Something else is unique about their singing. With the Zionists, every member is at liberty to interrupt the sermon by starting a song. When asked about this, they answered that it helps them not to fall asleep during the preaching and for the speaker to collect his thoughts! Another reason for the singing is, of course, the congregation’s approval to what has been said. They reinforce the message by changing to another register.⁷⁴

Are Zion’s lyrics undeveloped? Naudé observes that there are surprisingly few references to the Holy Spirit in the corpus of ZCC hymns.⁷⁵ This is certainly not singular with Zionism, but with Christendom in general, especially if songs composed before the twentieth century come under scrutiny. Indeed, Malawian Zionists have not issued their own hymnal; neither do I know of any larger composition. They express their particularity during *kubonga*, when the word Zion is interjected and themes of the songs are to their liking. Moreover, the topics of Zion, prophecy, dancing and healing run through the Bible and have been set to their musical taste. Zionists, however, are not exclusivists. Being a Zionist means embracing, not rejecting, the Christian heritage. It is therefore a matter of course that the churches, which have come out of the CCAP (4, 5 and 6) retain their lyrical anthology. Neither have other Zionist denominations problems with their hymnals. One factor, which has

⁷³ Int. Mlevi Thomas T.W. Kayenda, (2), Msangu, 28.7.2007.

⁷⁴ Matthew Engelke, *A Problem of Presence. Beyond Scripture in an African Church*, Berkeley: University of California, 2007, p. 218.

⁷⁵ Piet Naudé, *The Zionist Christian Church in South Africa*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995, p. 107.

certainly helped them to adopt the lyrics as theirs, is the fact that they sing in their particular, solemn way. If not the text, than at least the tune is Zionist.

Zionism is an oral culture and religion. Studies show that narrative patterns persist in a society even after the introduction of writing.⁷⁶ Thinking takes place in mnemonic patterns.⁷⁷ Information is channeled through learned Scripture verses. Entire hymnbooks are present only in the mind of the congregation, hardly ever on paper. All this has strengths and weaknesses – and consequences in any case. We will see that such a culture leans toward legalism. Its rules and regulations, once learned by heart, provide guidelines and ethical certainty. Dogmas and creeds are not written down, church laws are literal (and sometimes literalistic) interpretations from the Bible. Moreover, text-based societies tend to derive meaning from the language itself, oftentimes detached from the speaker or writer. Oral-based cultures, on the other hand, find meaning in the contextual situation of the speaking event.⁷⁸ The same applies when listening to a Zionist preacher.

d. Interpretation of Dancing and Music

“The ‘Dove’ was a side-paddle steamer,...
and she began operating early 1893.
She was nick-named ‘Chikapa’, the meaning of which is nicely explained
in G. M. Sanderson’s Dictionary of the Yao Language as
‘a circular motion imparted to the buttocks in dancing...
hence a paddle-wheel steamship...”⁷⁹

Music is a leader. The spell of rhythms and melodies can move human beings to extraordinary achievements or gruesome deeds. Many soldiers found the last bit of wanting courage in the beat of the drummer boy.

⁷⁶ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy. The Technologizing of the Word*, London: Methuen, 1982.

⁷⁷ Piet Naudé, *The Zionist Christian Church in South Africa*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995, p. 35.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁷⁹ P.A. Cole-King, *Lake Malawi Steamers*, Limbe: Montfort Press, 1987, p. 32.

People in love thrive on music, but seducers use it, too. Tunes are gatherers of people. They have built communities around age-old fireplaces and in modern Karaoke bars. Music gives and takes emotions. There were scenes in the 1950s USA when entire audiences swooned in response to Frank Sinatra or Elvis Presley – seized by an emotional excitement so intense as to induce fainting. “Classic” music can have similar effects. Richard Wagner was a skilled master of the musical manipulation of emotions, and this is the reason why some love his compositions while others love to hate them.⁸⁰ Music is a channel, too. By means of it, people have expressed themselves since times immemorial.⁸¹ Common to all of us is the need to make something of us known, our feelings, our knowledge and our faith, too. Music offers the means to do this through lyrics, tunes and dances. Typical examples for this, heavy with African influence, are the blues and the jazz. The first is more on the minor side, expressing sorrow which had its origins in slavery; the latter has more positive overtones, celebrating the diversity and contingency of our lives. Now I want to describe how music leads the Zionists and, secondly, how they express themselves through it.

Andrew Greeley argues that music is the strongest means to evoke religious feelings in people, stronger than prayer or listening to a sermon.⁸² In Zion, too, music is more than ‘Scripture in song.’ The time and significance allotted to it gives dancing, playing instruments and singing its own quality. Music serves the purpose to fetch the people from where they are and lead them to a mystical encounter with God. Zionists are tuning themselves to God. As such, the singing and dancing is not an end in itself, but a well trodden path into God’s presence. Yet this ideal is not constantly arrived at. There is not always a breakthrough into God’s presence, sometimes they just sing and dance for the sake of it; once in a

⁸⁰ Oliver Sacks, *Musicophilia*, London: Picador, 2007, p. 294.

⁸¹ Gerhard Kubik, *Malawian Music. A Framework for Analysis*, Zomba: Centre for Social Research, University of Malawi, 1987.

⁸² Andrew M. Greeley, *The Sociology of the Paranormal*, London: Sage, 1975. In: Inger Furseth, Pål Repstad, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, p. 129.

blue moon they don't fit the sermon into the service any longer. On most Sundays, however, the music becomes an entrance into the spiritual field. The Zionist liturgy is processual. *Kubonga* leads to *seji*; *seji* prepares the ground for the preaching; the sermons build up the faith for the healing ceremonies.

To the individual worshiper, dancing is an expression of worship, a service rendered to please his God. Zionists adulate, exalt, intercede, invoke, prostrate, praise, venerate and sacrifice during dancing. The dance, although filled with symbolic acts, is not a symbol for something else; it is an act in its own right. Needless to say that this kind of worship found open doors among Africans. I usually believe in nurture over nature, but in this case, rhythmic movements are, I believe, ingrained to most Africans. I have seen kids who could barely walk already dancing on their shaky feet. If I am right that they are hardwired like this, than a dancing church, which on average spends 2/3 of its time in physical motion, could be nothing but a resounding success on this continent. This should also be viewed against the time background. Zionism came to Malawi when dancing was not allowed in any other denomination in Malawi.

Dance is, in a way, the simplest and the most profound form of all arts. Dance has not yet separated the creator from his creation; art and artist are still one and the same. It is here that one moves not only in space or in time, but in space and time simultaneously. It is, together with story-telling, the foremost medium of the poor and illiterate. Zionists belong to the rural poor in Malawi. Most local congregations don't even have the means to build themselves a sanctuary wherein they could dance. Theirs is not a literal religion, also for the reason that the majority of their female members and many brothers cannot read (see the figures in chapter 6). But dancing enables the Zionists to convey messages, store memory and retrieve it, too. The quotation given above about naming the steamer illustrates how dancing has been an important means to create conceptional analogies in the minds of Malawians. Moreover, the dancing event dramatizes the messages. Now the Zionists are staging salvific history, with them as its modern protagonists. It all comes to life again.

The walls of Jericho crumble on Sunday afternoon in rural Malawi, Noah goes back into the ark and the children of Israel pass through the Red Sea as the Zionists sing and move accordingly. Church members can thus 're-experience' the text, perhaps more than through the preaching.⁸³ Dancing is therefore more than a reflection of the past, it becomes an expression of contemporary identity. It is "*a symbol of the way people feel about themselves.*"⁸⁴ Researchers usually divide dances between those of recreation and others that preserve identity. Zionist dances serve *both* purposes.

Further, to the individual, dancing in Zion is an outlet. There is no question that the worshipers can give vent to otherwise suppressed emotions. Their sudden jolts, jerks, changes of direction and marked catapulting into the air all speak of a break from propriety, which Malawian culture in general and their Christian ethic in particular have laid upon them. This kind of psychological outlet by dancing has been observed in almost all cultures; studies exist about the Samoans,⁸⁵ Bali⁸⁶ and in Mexico among the Zapotec.⁸⁷

Dancing is not only an expression of power, it is power. Salome in the Bible and the ancient Greek and Romans dancers, who had beguiled their potentates to the extent that they became empresses, serve as well known examples. The reigning ballerina of the imperial ballet in Moscow, Kchessinskaya, had not only held the cousin of the Tsar so spellbound that he married her, but she remained a strong influence after the revolution when Lenin gave his first public speech from her balcony. How do Zionist dancers have power in their dusty arenas in Malawi? Their dances do not wield an explicit erotical wand, as may be argued from all other examples

⁸³ Joseph Byrd, "Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutical Theory and Pentecostal Proclamation", in: *Pneuma*, Cleveland: Society for Pentecostal Studies, vol. 15, 1993, pp. 203-214.

⁸⁴ Anya P. Royce, *The Anthropology of Dance*, Alton: Dance Books, 2002, pp. xix, xxiii, 31, 163.

⁸⁵ Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, New York: Morrow, 1928.

⁸⁶ Anya P. Royce, *The Anthropology of Dance*, Alton: Dance Books, 2002, p. 81.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

mentioned above. (Cultures such as Zionism, which believe in the uncleanness of women, avoid any exhibitionistic dancing.⁸⁸)

For once, Zionist dancing implies control over one's own body. This is an important frame, for several oppressive forces linger to take physical control away from them, such as sexism and related virilocality, labour migration, sickness and taboos. Such dancing must have had a liberating effect after crawling out of a mine or being secluded for a longer period of time after childbirth.

Secondly, Zion's androcentrism is suspended for a moment, for dancing together in a circle makes everyone equal. No one is the beginning, nobody signifies the end. Spiritually, men and women are on par. There are elements in Zion's spirituality which are the prerogative of women, other functions belong to the male side, but both sexes are on equal ground while dancing.

Thirdly, although they dance to please the Lord, their actions still convey a message to the audience and this carries in itself a certain amount of authority. There are recreational and formal dances, the latter giving a sense of identity. Those dances "*tend to be showpieces.*"⁸⁹ I would still doubt if Zion's dances are showpieces. They put on a good show, but not primarily for the onlookers. Performers talk and greet each other in a fraternistic way during the dances, but no such openness is allowed with the audience. Dance is one of the few media that can assault all five senses at the same time, making it a very potent carrier of any message. The mock dance, for example, expresses moral authority. Another message to the onlookers is that this group of dancers functions as one body, one organism made up of individuals who have come together in harmony. Lomax assumes that music is a stylization of how people interact. Black African singing is "*wide-voiced, superbly cohesive, polyphonic choralizing*" allowing for "*a sociable overlapping of parts*" with "*polyrhythmic interaction.*"⁹⁰ Zion's singing and dancing, the circles

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

⁹⁰ Alan Lomax, *Cantometrics: An Approach to the Anthropology of Music*, Berkeley: University of California, 1976, p. 42.

formed and the lead of the precentor, it all expresses the social unit they are. Power is in unity and there are members on record who have joined the church because they had first of all been attracted by the dancing.

Are their dresses an expression, a declaration of liminality? Does their worship set them apart from society and thus have liminal quality? Albrecht thought so regarding the Pentecostals.⁹¹ There is a difference between otherworldliness and liminality. The Zionists life-style certainly bears marks of liminality, especially if seen from the outside. But to them, having become a Zionists means to have arrived. Liminality speaks of transition, of being caught in the middle, betwixt and between (Victor Turner). Zionists would never admit to such a state. The ideal, which they uphold every Sunday, and which they live in their settlements, says that their transition is complete. At the same time they have the honesty to realize that a Zionist can fall from grace – and become ‘liminal’ again. Preaching serves to prevent this.

3. Preaching

“Preaching is heady wine. It is pleasant to tell people where they get off.”⁹²

Zionists would never introduce their preachers with such adulation as is done in Pentecostal and charismatic churches. Right before the sermon, the leaders of the Zion Church (30) kneel down, sometimes with their faces touching the ground. The leader of the meeting will say “*ameni*,” which is echoed by the congregation. The leader repeats, “*ameni*” and the church responds by “*Oh, Jerusalema*.” Then follows a short prayer by the leader, perhaps another song and it’s time for the sermon.⁹³

⁹¹ Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999, pp. 210f.

⁹² Sir Arnold Lunn, <http://www.cybernation.com/victory/quotations/authors/quotes>. 19.12.2008.

⁹³ Int. Thomas Mlangeni, National General Secretary, Zion Church (30), Ndirande, 12.8.2007.

a. A Sermon by Mlevi Kalulu

Without further ado, here is a sermon from the CCACZ (1), preached on the 2nd of July 2006 by *Mlevi Kalulu* at Kampala, which is, in this case, a suburb of Blantyre:

Preacher	I am in the book of Matthew 28 verse 28, ee, aa, 8:28
Reader	Demon Possessed Men of Gadara
Preacher	Hallelujah!
Congregation	Amen
Preacher	There were some people, there was someone who was demon possessed, he was resident in Gadara (verse 1) he was residing at Kampala, hallelujah1
Congregation	Amen
Preacher	go ahead preaching
Reader	your verse No. 1
Preacher	Eee
Reader	When He arrived at the other side of the lake...
Preacher	When those people had left, after Jesus Christ had left for the other side of the lake, what did they do?
Reader	of the Gadarenes
Preacher	there of the Gadarenes
Reader	He was met by two men
Preacher	Hallelujah
Congregation	Amen
Preacher	After Jesus had left , after He had left for the other side of the lake there at Gadara, He saw two men, these two men were demon possessed, just here in Kampala, like any other place as is always the case, when Jesus arrives at that place, demon flee, hallelujah!
Congregation	Amen
Preacher	continue reading
Reader	half verse
Preacher	Eee
Reader	who came out of the burial caves there
Preacher	These people had their sleeping place in the graves, because they had pleasure in eating demons. It happens that if a person is not a believer, a person who does not know Jesus, we say, whatever that person does pertains to the grave, hallelujah!
Congregation	Amen
Preacher	Because whatever that person does, does not appear to be good among men, continue reading

Reader	they were too fierce
Preacher	These people were too fierce, when you want to tell him about Jesus Christ, he can scold you, even people passing around that place, they are afraid because they scold because they were sleeping in the grave, hallelujah!
Congregation	Amen
Preacher	continue reading
Reader	that no one dared travel on that road
Preacher	No matter how many people were, and no matter how strong the people were, in those days when Jesus found those men, there was nobody who dared travel on that road, it was a terrible demon, when someone tried to pass there, where could that end? He could be finished there, hallelujah!
Congregation	Amen
Preacher	I believe when these demons saw the man Jesus, they said something, continue
Reader	verse 29
Preacher	Eee
Reader	At once they screamed and said
Preacher	They screamed and said, if anyone here feels he or she is bound by sins, he or she should scream and say... Continue reading
Reader	What do you want with us, you Son of God?
Preacher	What wrong have I done so that you want to kill me on the way, I don't want this type of sin, I don't want the sin of adultery, what wrong have I committed against you, this is how we should cry to God, hallelujah
Congregation	Amen
Preacher	continue reading
Reader	have you come to torture us?
Preacher	the demons complained right there, they were struggling inside those men who were sleeping in the grave, they complained, 'have you come here to torture us', Eee, 'have you come here to torture us?', what is happening here? Have you come to torture us?' When our hearts are not good, we should complain, when you, as the one that calls himself after Christ, yet you continue living in dire poverty, yet you hold the name of Jesus, you should cry to God and say, 'Lord, do you want me to continue living in dire poverty, you should shout with a loud voice to heaven, hallelujah

Congregation	Continue reading
Reader	the right time has not yet come
Preacher	the right time has not yet come for you to judge us, time is not yet for your judgment on us, oh Lord, the time has not yet come, continue reading
Reader	verse 30
Preacher	Eee
Reader	at a distance
Preacher	at a distance from them, just from here to the C.I. [Catholic Institute, nearby] continue reading
Reader	from them, a large herd of pigs was feeding
Preacher	there was a large herd of pigs feeding at a distance, continue reading
Reader	verse 31
Preacher	Eee
Reader	and the demons begged Jesus and said
Preacher	and the demons begged and said, at a distance there is a herd of pigs and where are the shepherds too? They are there too, taking care of the pigs, hallelujah
Congregation	Amen
Preacher	continue reading
Reader	"if you drive us out, send us into the herd of the pigs"!
Preacher	Hallelujah
Congregation	Amen
Preacher	and the demons said 'if you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs. What are the pigs? Come here, 'what are the pigs?' We are the pigs if we allow the demons that have come out of the repentant people to enter into us, those people have forsaken stealing, robbery, murder, adultery, so after those people have repented, before the demons come out of them, they mention the name of a Christian so that they can enter into him or her, they beg to enter into the heart of Mlevi Kalulu, does that mean that I am in good standing?
Congregation	No!
Preacher	here is a confusion, hallelujah
Congregation	Amen, preach!
Preacher	demons do speak, if someone comes to repent, he says he is a sinner, a robber, an adulterer, a smoker, or is addicted to alcohol, drugs, tobacco, Indian hemp [marijuana], etc, etc this person can do all sorts of sins even fighting, then he comes and says he wants to repent, demons are cast out and if they beg to enter

	into the heart of Angodzo, does that mean that Angodzo is standing right with God?
Congregation	No!
Preacher	Hallelujah!
Congregation	Amen
Preacher	Let us resist these demons, when someone has repented, such demons should not find access to the Zion church, should they be allowed to come to Zion here?
Congregation	No!
Preacher	Or, even if someone is a witch and the witchcraft demon has been driven out, is it right for the witchcraft demon to come and join Zion church?
Congregation	No! it is not right!
Preacher	Is that true?
Congregation	Not at all!
Preacher	It is important to resist these demons, it is said that after they were driven out they entered into the herd of pigs, they knew the pigs were strong animals and after they entered, they had much struggle.
One member	Much struggle indeed!
Preacher	go ahead and finish
Reader	on verse 32
Preacher	Eee
Reader	He said to them
Preacher	He said to them
Reader	Go
Preacher	When demons are driven out of a repentant person, he or she is asked, 'do you want to go and enter into the people of Zion Church?' He or she answers, "yes" then he or she is told 'go and find the pigs among Zionists', and when the pig starts rushing, where shall it end? It will end in the Lake, hallelujah!
Congregation	Amen
Preacher	continue reading
Reader	so they left
Preacher	so they left, continue reading
Reader	and went off
Preacher	and went off, continue reading
Reader	into the pigs
Preacher	and after Jesus had commanded, the demons had to leave and entered into the Lake, continue reading
Reader	and look
Preacher	Eee

Reader	the whole herd
Preacher	Eee
Reader	rushed down
Preacher	Eee
Reader	the steep bank into the lake
Preacher	Eee, go ahead and finish
Reader	and died in the water
Preacher	Hallelujah
Congregation	Amen
Preacher	A person who has been with Zion church and then develops a drinking habit and smoking, and is caught in somebody's house, is that right, a Zionist?
One member	No, that is pig's food!
Preacher	Only pigs can do that, all the demons driven out by the Pentecostals should not come and dwell in the hearts of Zionists, hallelujah!
Congregation	Amen
Preacher	Does it mean that such a person has the right standing?
Congregation	Not at all
Preacher	There is something wrong somewhere

The sermon ends here. There is a song break, "*Iwe tiye...*" and "*Munthu Wazisoniyo*" followed by Mlevi Tembo's preaching.

b. What Makes the Zionists' Preaching Unique?

Two features distinguish Zionist preaching. First, they employ a reader from the beginning to the end, so that in fact two men are standing in front of the congregation, often busy with their own dialogue. Secondly, there is hardly ever one speaker. On average, three preachers address the congregation during one service.

The reader serves different purposes. First, it happens that preachers are illiterate.⁹⁴ Yet they have a good command of Bible memory and can name chapters and verses precisely. The readers are good for the dialogue style, moreover, they warrant that the preacher never strays too much from the path. Preaching in Zion is to be as closely as possible to

⁹⁴ Bengt Sundkler, *Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists*, London: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 48.

the Bible, and this becomes easier when someone constantly feeds the preacher with verses. Sometimes the preacher reaches the end of his interpretation, then he asks, “Any more to read?” Implied is, of course, the question, ‘Is there any more for me to preach?’ To mind comes a picture of two soldiers. One is shooting with a machine gun; the other feeds the ammunition into it. The following example shows how close the cooperation between reader and preacher is and, therefore, how interwoven text and message can become:

Reader:	We are on verse 13
Preacher:	Eee
Reader:	“Bear with each other...”
Preacher:	bearing with each other
Reader:	“forgive one another”
Preacher:	Mr so and so said such and such to me
Reader:	“whatever grievances you may have against one another”
Preacher:	It is common to hear someone say, ‘What that man did to me I will never forget, and I will never set my foot at his home, never, on that day he said some bad words about me, I cannot forget until my mother gets out of the grave.’ These words are said by a Zionist with his stars on him. If Jesus had an attitude like this, could he have died for us? ⁹⁵

If a preacher strays too much from the path, the reader will simply open his mouth, read something from the text and thus bring the orator back to the main plot. In this way, the reader can wield a limited amount of control over the preacher. It happens, though, that the preacher gets ahead of the reader by narrating the story before it is read. The preacher gets his inspiration from the text. Often, when nothing comes, he urges the reader to go on, or he simply repeats the text, sometimes paraphrasing it a bit.⁹⁶ The preacher thus selects his message by

⁹⁵ Minister Chilowa Banda, ZCC, sermon, Majiga, Ndirande, Blantyre, 9.7.2006.

⁹⁶ Joseph Jimu, sermon, Zion ya Bata (2), Chidothe, Mlumbé, Zomba, 16.7.2006.

highlighting certain passages, while omitting to comment on others.⁹⁷ Sometimes the reader isn't sure where to stop, especially when the sermon reaches its climax, so he just halts until the preacher encourages him to continue. The reader almost always reads the headlines of chapters and paragraphs, concluded by resounding amens and hallelujahs. This inclusion serves their contextual assurance. Preachers use their readers to build up suspense. *Mlevi* Tembo preached on Mat. 12, 43ff, the evil spirit who came back:⁹⁸

Reader:	It can't find a place
Preacher:	It can't find a place
Reader:	verse 44
Preacher:	Yes, what does it do?
Reader:	it says to itself
Preacher:	then it says to itself
Reader:	I will go back to my house

Such technique of asking questions, which the text answers straight away, never fails to impress the hearers. Indeed, the preachers are close to the Biblical message, as long as their questions reflect it.

⁹⁷ Patrick A. Kalilombe, *Doing Theology at the Grassroots: Theological Essays from Malawi*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1999, p. 207.

⁹⁸ *Mlevi* Tembo, sermon, CCACZ, Kampala, Blantyre, 2.7.2006.



A picture of a preacher at the HACZ (3) in Mbayani, Blantyre, with his reader. The service took place on Sunday, 14.3.2004.

The other feature that makes their homiletics distinct is their team character. Usually three men share this ministry and preach, one after another. All speakers are at pains to demonstrate their unity, often one theme runs through all sermons. Present speakers usually refer to their predecessor's choice and wisdom at the beginning of the sermon. When it was his turn to preach, *Mlevi Masina* commented, "*I feel very sweet in my heart for the message that has just been preached here.*"⁹⁹ In the given example, *Mlevi Kalulu* spoke about the demon possessed men and the pigs from Mat.8:28ff. He was followed by *Mlevi Tembo*, who preached from Mat.12:43ff about an unclean spirit that returns with seven others. *Mlevi Masina* concluded it all by interpreting passages from Mat.8: 28ff; 1.Ki.17:18 (Elijah raises the widow's son) and Ac.13:15 (about exhorting

⁹⁹ *Mlevi Masina*, sermon, CCACZ, Kampala, Blantyre, 2.7.2006.

the brothers). One theme ran through the three homilies, namely, “Don’t backslide!”

Preachers avoid conveying the impression of preparedness.¹⁰⁰ To them, the Spirit’s inspiration is a sudden and unforetellable event. Therefore, the speakers can express their marvel of how all their messages harmonize so well. Are sermons ever prepared? Yes, they are. Their main method is an unsystematic Bible reading, working out chain references and memorizing them. Yet one can feel among the Zionists the same sentiment, which beset the early Pentecostals. They rejected sermon preparation; saw it as a human meddling in divine affairs. They boasted not to know what to say until they stepped into the pulpit.¹⁰¹

Preaching turns proceed according to ranks. Usually, the bishop or the highest office holder present gives the last address, while the youngest preacher is the first to speak, acting as a trailblazer. Once in a meeting in Chikhwawa, I heard the preacher announce his part to be “the soup,” whereas after him would come a speaker who is going to present “the meal” to the congregation. The ascending authority of the speakers is in line with other African oral traditions. For example in a traditional council, different advisors and representatives speak, but the chief concludes the meeting with his address. This last speech would be a reflection of different opinions and aspects, which will provide for the chief’s final decision on the matter.

Three sermons seem a lot to digest. But they are not. The one theme makes it easier to stay focused; three different preachers add variety and keep the concentration level from slipping too low. In our case, *Mlevi* Kalulu preached for 11 minutes. *Mlevi* Tembo only took nine minutes and Masina’s conclusion took again 11 minutes. Taken together, this did not last much longer than the average sermon in a Reformed church and was still much shorter than sermons in Pentecostal churches, which can easily

¹⁰⁰ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990 p. 87.

¹⁰¹ Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003, p. 114.

last for more than an hour. The sermons in another service¹⁰² of the HACZ (3) lasted 5, 19 and 5 minutes, thus emphasising the trailblazing part of the forerunner, the “meal part” and the final sanctioning by the leading *mlevi*. What it really means, if looked at from the topical and time perspectives, is that three different speakers preach *one* sermon. This custom is, to the best of my knowledge, unique to Zionism.

c. Types and Techniques

Sermons are normally explanatory, verse by verse interpretations. They usually make one or two points. Other sermons are topical or concordant, yet they will apply their interpretative reading to every verse, looking at it in the light of their theme. Subjects may be topical, but this hardly ever means that the preacher ‘ploughs from Genesis to Revelation.’ British master preacher W.E. Sangster said that sermons cannot and should not have one point, but the Zionists apparently have not read his instructions.¹⁰³ The preacher is focused on this one point and hammers the truth home. Preacher Jimu introduced his focal point like this, “*Here is where we want to help one another today.*”¹⁰⁴

For South Africa, Kiernan was under the impression that Zion’s preachers do not produce ideas from Scripture. They mainly repeat the verses literally and paraphrase them. Every now and then an every day application is given, usually a literal command which needs little interpretation. “*Preaching is a drift, an experimentation with audience reaction.*”¹⁰⁵ Kiernan thinks that the poverty of themes is due to some safety, which less-assured preachers find when preaching classic Zion messages. For Malawi, it is true that within their own set of lyrics, texts and symbols, Zionists don’t like to stray much from the path. Preachers find their “safety” by referring to a set of standardized phrases and

¹⁰² *Mlevi* Mtambalika, *Mlevi* Taison, *Mlevi* Mbewe, sermon, HACZ (3), Chemussa, 11.6.2006.

¹⁰³ William E. Sangster, *The Craft of Sermon Construction*, London: Marshall Pickering, 1989, p. 66.

¹⁰⁴ Joseph Jimu, sermon, Zion ya Bata (2), Chidothe, Mlumbe, Zomba, 16.7.2006.

¹⁰⁵ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990 p. 90.

messages. This comes at the expense of intellectual creativity and theological originality, although the best preachers display creativity *within* these boundaries. This, however, does not mean that the speakers do not interpret their text. Here some examples:

“The vacant house means that Jesus has not yet taken the heart as his dwelling place.”¹⁰⁶

“The disciples knew who Jesus was, but do the people nowadays know who we are?”¹⁰⁷

“He [Paul to the Colossians] introduces his subject by saying ‘clothe yourselves as God’s chosen people,’ this means there are two types of clothing. First, for those who are not chosen and secondly for those that are chosen, hallelujah!”¹⁰⁸

“Nicodemus went to see Christ at nighttime because he was afraid of the other leaders.”¹⁰⁹

In the same sermon, Banda compared the use of medicine to the children of Israel going back to Egypt.¹¹⁰

The outer frame of dogmatic orthodoxy certainly helps the preachers not to become too extravagant with their interpretations. Sometimes I felt that they were closer to the truth than others. *Mlevi* Mtambalika preached that the fire baptism is a form of judgement.¹¹¹ Such theology is certainly closer to the Biblical message (of John the Baptist) than some Pentecostal interpretations, which have understood it as an experience to be sought.

In addition, preachers are apt to interpret Scripture *ad hoc*. Once, during the sermon of minister Banda of the ZCC (8), some listeners were getting a little dozy. This prompted the preacher to refer to the disciples

¹⁰⁶ *Mlevi* Masina, sermon, CCACZ (1), Kampala, Blantyre, 2.7.2006.

¹⁰⁷ Minister Chilowa Banda, ZCC, sermon, Majiga, Ndirande, Blantyre, 9.7.2006.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Joseph Jimu, sermon, Zion ya Bata (2), Chidothe, Mlumbe, Zomba, 16.7.2006.

¹¹⁰ Minister Chilowa Banda, ZCC, sermon, Majiga, Ndirande, Blantyre, 9.7.2006.

¹¹¹ *Mlevi* Mtambalika, sermon, HACZ (3), Chemussa, 11.6.2006.

falling asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane.¹¹² It would therefore be wrong to claim that Zionists do not interpret Scripture. In comparison, there seems to be less cross-reference preaching in Malawi over Kiernan's observations in South Africa. Common to all Zionists and many AICs is their preference for the Old Testament.

The apparent weakness, which comes to mind when listening to Zion's preachers, is their ignorance of historical facts and background knowledge to the Bible. That is why their preaching cannot be labelled 'exegetical.' Nicodemus, for example, one preacher proclaimed, had been baptized by Christ and that the same man had been an "*elder of the Roman nation*." The preacher also emphasized how different the water baptisms of John the Baptist and Jesus were or that the Baptist was arrested by Herod the Great.¹¹³ There are no references to the original languages of the Bible, neither are etymological explanations given.

Sometimes they lapse into the use of anakuluthons. "...people will start arguing that these are the things of ancient people, now we are living in the dispensation of grace, peace be unto us."¹¹⁴ Such breaks in sense and sentence structure are common, especially if the orator is full of information and tries to transmit as much as possible of it. The preacher does, however, trigger stored information of the Zionists' doctrinal repertoire. A sudden addition about the "dispensation of grace" will remind the listeners of former teachings on the subject, making up this 'community of memory.'¹¹⁵

Sermons, however, are not "experimentations with audience reaction."¹¹⁶ Far be it that Zion would have some kind of "stand up comedian" preaching. There is much involvement of the congregation, but the preacher is always in the driver's seat. He knows where to take the crowd. Such kind of speaker-audience interplay is, of course, not

¹¹² Minister Chilowa Banda, ZCC, sermon, Majiga, Ndirande, Blantyre, 9.7.2006.

¹¹³ Joseph Jimu, sermon, Zion ya Bata (2), Chidothe, Mlumbé, Zomba, 16.7.2006.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Robert N. Bellah, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, pp. 152.

¹¹⁶ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990 p. 90.

restricted to the Zionists; it's a very African element. The congregation is involved by words of affirmation and applause as a sign of enthusiastic approval. In the ZCC (8) the preacher used a 'patient' to answer questions concerning healing. Minister Banda suddenly produced a factitious patient during the sermon and interviewed him on the spot:

Preacher:	After healing we don't force people, we just ask the patient, 'are you healed?'
Patient:	Yes, I am healed.
Preacher:	We tell him, "then you may go."
Patient:	No, I am not going. I am afraid because the sickness may come again to me then where shall I get help, I have been deceived without you.
Preacher:	Oh, so you want to be with us?
Patient:	Eee

In the same sermon, Banda also addressed a member of the congregation as a contrived sinner, who answered him, too.

Responses can sometimes be heard from individual members. This usually happens when the message has taken such a hold on someone that he or she steps out of group response. The congregation can also stand up during the sermon if gripped by emotion.

Zionists do not draw from a great variety of techniques. Only very few preachers in Malawi do.¹¹⁷ For example, we did not come across any proverbs in the sermons, although Malawi has a rich heritage of them and current usage in rural courts and literature.¹¹⁸ As we have seen, many techniques pertain to the working relationship between preacher and reader. Zion's preachers still have some other skills at their disposal. To work the crowd, the primary method is the rhetoric question. It is common conversational style in Malawi to let one's dialogue partner finish a sentence, whose conclusion is plain to see or which ends with a phrase. This keeps the listeners alert and involves them in the train of

¹¹⁷ Ernst R. Wendland, *Preaching that Grabs the Heart: A Rhetoric-stylistic Study of the Chichewa Revival Sermons of Shadrack Wame*, Zomba: Kachere- CLAIM-Kachere, 2000.

¹¹⁸ Joseph C. Chakanza, *Wisdom of the People: 2000 Chinyanja Proverbs*, Zomba: Kachere, 2001.

thought. Moreover, Zionists (and many other churches in Africa) have key words, which automatically trigger a response from the crowd. Say “*Halleluja*” and one will reap a resounding “*amen*.” Common in Malawi are “*mtendere anthu a Mulungu*” (peace [to] the people of God) and “*mtendere Ziyoni*” (peace [be unto] Zion).

Repetition is another means to underline their messages. Preachers repeat the reader’s (Bible) words. Often they only repeat the last bit of what was read, go off into interpreting it and thereby forget the first part of the verse, which may contain important information, too. Re-narration is usually done by paraphrasing the text and sometimes the Biblical names are exchanged for modern Malawian ones, just to make the message more applicable. They repeat their own words, too, thus hammering their message in. Repetition is not necessarily proof for the text’s importance, but could be a mere technique in communicating the oral mind.¹¹⁹

We have come across everyday parables to highlight the meaning of Scripture. They use modern concepts as symbols. Cars stand for wealth and computers for omniscience.¹²⁰ Interjections and exclamations are often heard. They do a lot to keep their audience alert. The best preachers have wit and use common sense to make their messages come alive. They have a feeling for language, for specific and fitting words, which will help them to keep their listeners spellbound.

d. Genre: Moralizing Sermons

Almost all their sermons are moralizing homilies, although addressing the vices is not unique to Zionism.¹²¹ Shot through with do’s and don’ts, the orations are ever constant reminders for Zionists to abstain from all carnalities. Catalogues of vices abound in the Bible. The sinaitic covenant gives detailed ethical prohibitions, even in the New Testament 99

¹¹⁹ Piet Naudé, *The Zionist Christian Church in South Africa*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995, p. 39.

¹²⁰ *Mlevi Mtambalika*, sermon, HACZ (3), Chemussa, 11.6.2006.

¹²¹ Kenneth R. Ross, *Gospel Ferment in Malawi: Theological Essays*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1995, pp. 88ff.

different sins are listed.¹²² If direct reference won't do it, then the preacher will use his imagination to refer to different sins. For example, *Mlevi* Tembo, who spoke about the seven unclean spirits, assigned a particular cardinal sin to each of them.¹²³ Vices not directly mentioned in the Bible are listed, too. Gambling is a sin and playing cards is forbidden. One name says it all. In Chinyanja, playing cards is sometimes referred to by the preachers as *wachionandani*, literally, 'Who has seen it?' This is an allusion to cards stuffed away in the sleeve while gambling, where the question 'Who has seen it,' pops up every now and then.

Catalogues of vices are therefore the basic ingredient for the Zionist preacher. In this way, he evangelizes his flock over and over again. Zionists, much more than the Pentecostals, are constantly catechized by their preachers.¹²⁴ This fits into the overall liturgy. As impressive as their colourful dresses and joyful noises are to onlookers, the primary meaning is directed to themselves. The sermon is no exception to this.

Luckmann sees the origin of moralizing speeches in the Old Testament.¹²⁵ One key element in them is the prophecy of impending doom. Zion's preachers indeed construct cataclysmic events in front of their hearers. This leads to a formula, explaining the basic structure of this homiletic genre: *vice + doom = destruction*.

How does this formula translate into their preaching? For example, smoking tobacco is a cardinal sin, mentioned in one breath with adultery. If a preacher mentions this vice, he will pound it for some time, with a mixture of ridicule and commiseration for those still ensnared by it. For doom, he might add personal death, which is inescapable. One great danger in Malawi is to fall at the mercy of a reckless mini-bus driver. It is a statistical fact that travelling in a mini-bus in this country brings one nearer to life's end than any other means of transport. Now, says the

¹²² Ulf Strohhorn, *Spiritual Parenthood*, Blantyre: International Bible College Berea, 2006, p. 48.

¹²³ *Mlevi* Tembo, sermon, CCACZ (1), Kampala, Blantyre, 2.7.2006.

¹²⁴ Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999, p. 205.

¹²⁵ Thomas Luckmann, "Moralizing Sermons, Then and Now," in: *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology of Religion*, ed. Richard K. Fenn, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003, p. 388.

preacher, the sinner has just smoked his last butt and enters the fateful bus with an unrepentant heart. The driver is drunk and steers the vehicle over a bridge into a river. At this point in the sermon, destruction should follow. This, however, is not always pronounced. The listeners can think what unpreparedness in the face of eternity means. Pentecostals, on the other hand, do not linger for long at this point. They would make an appeal, an altar call, begging the sinners to come forward to receive salvation. Their formula is thus: *vice + doom = crisis* (*crisis + decision = salvation*).

This the Zionists hardly ever do. One reason is that the climax of the service is not the altar call, but the healing ritual, which follows soon. And Zion's healing concept is so broad that it offers help to almost all physical and social ills. Another reason is that their concept of salvation is more holistic than the Pentecostals'. In their understanding, salvation cannot be narrowed down to a single event, but ensues by living the Zionist way of life. Yet this kind of moral lecture has a sobering effect, especially since it leaves the sinner in a narrow lane with no escape route. Condemnation without instruction on how to live a different life remains a weakness in their preaching. One indicator for this are the catalogues of virtues, which the Bible mentions, too. Zionists don't.

e. Vanguard of African Culture?

In a straight-forward approach, Hilary Mijoga tried to answer the question whether AICs are vanguards of African culture, as has been suggested by some.¹²⁶ The question as such is wrong, at least seen from a Zionist perspective. African culture is defined as traditional religion in the paper, and as such is given a negative, spiritistic aftertaste. To say that Zionists are vanguards of such religious cults is to assume that turkeys are voting for Christmas. Zionists are Zionists because they are not (any longer) traditional worshippers. Mijoga did not look into AICs "rituals," but tried to find traditional elements in their hermeneutics. He analyzed 299

¹²⁶ Hilary B.P. Mijoga, "African Instituted Churches as Vanguard of African Culture: A Reassessment", *Missionalia*, Menlo Park: Southern African Missiological Society, vol. 30, no. 2, 2002, p. 198.

sermons and investigated to what extent “traditional” elements like stories, retelling, proverbs, songs, quotations and rhetorical questions are used by the preachers. He answers the question negatively and rightly so. Zionists hardly feature in Mijoga’s study, but my findings confirm his conclusion: “[it] is clear that they [AICs] show little reflection of characteristic African practices which could have shown that they support African culture.”¹²⁷ This leads him to conclude further that these churches are not new versions of African Traditional Religions. I agree with this conclusion, but disagree with the method. More traditional rhetoric would not have made the AICs automatically prone to spiritistic exercises.

How much of traditional communicative techniques flow into the Zionists’ preaching? A lot, as we have seen, especially on the technical side. Yet Zionists are reluctant to use the entire rhetoric stock, which their cultural background offers.¹²⁸ Once I asked why they never employ any of our Malawian fables in their sermons, as they could well drive a point home, too. To this they answered that those fables are fictitious and they could not afford to spin such yarns. They would lose credibility if they talked about Christ and about the hyena outwitting the rabbit in one sermon. Zionists therefore make a sharp distinction between their rhetoric techniques, which are as African as they can come, and cultural contents, which are more often rejected than not. This all points to the standardization of homiletic repertoire, which runs on fixed orbits in their orthodox universe.

Mijoga did not unearth anything new among the AIC preachers. He states, “*I argue that AICs in Malawi do not present a Christianity that is distinct* [from ‘mainline’ churches].”¹²⁹ I wonder if he had arrived at the same conclusion with more exposure to Zionists’ preaching and singing. Zion’s music stands out among all AICs. Dancing is their distinctive form of

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ See David Mphande, *Tonga Proverbs for Teaching and Preaching*, Zomba: Kachere-CLAIM, 2006, for a constructive concept in this area.

¹²⁹ Hilary B.P. Mijoga, “African Instituted Churches as Vanguards of African Culture: A Reassessment”, *Missionalia*, Menlo Park: Southern African Missiological Society, vol. 30, no. 2, 2002, p. 198.

worship among all Malawian churches, in which they have blended traditional formats with newer Christian contents. For preaching, their contribution is certainly in the areas of “team preaching” and the alternating style with the reader. This they do as a class on their own, not as a vanguard of something to come, neither as a rearguard of something gone by, but as Zionists.

4. Healing and Health

“Medical reality, too, is socially constructed.”¹³⁰

This section continues the description of elements, which define Zionist identity. We have already seen in chapter 3 how spiritual healing and *its* related illnesses have defined the movement and how this has been a major bone of contention.

After describing an average Sunday afternoon healing ritual, the theme is investigated further by looking into the prophets’ and healers’ roles in the healing system, including the concept of health, sickness and therapy. Demarcations and congruences are defined in regard to traditional, colonial and biomedical health systems, leading to a discussion and hypothesis on how to interpret the Zionists’ state of mind during the rites.

I use the term ‘*traditional*’ medicine when referring to psychological and herbal African healing practices, which are largely regional and autochthonic. The term ‘*western*’ is not as good as ‘*biomedical*’ medicine, but both denote the scientific approach of verification based on purely physical and traceable processes in the body. For a further, critical discussion, which comes to the same conclusion with this terminology, see Luedke and West¹³¹ and McGuire.¹³²

¹³⁰ Meredith B. McGuire, *Ritual Healing in Suburban America*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991, p. 5.

¹³¹ Harry G. West, Tracy J. Luedke, eds., “Healing Divides: Therapeutic Border Work in Southeast Africa”, in: *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, pp. 4f.

Description: The Healing Rites

We have come to the last part of the service, which is its culmination. The sermon has been preached and the believers are prepared to enter the spiritual field in its most concrete form: faith healing. By now, the sun is about to set. Twilight is an important component in their healing practice. In the CCACZ at Chirimba, the *mlevi* times his sermon and enters the finishing line just before sunset.¹³³ Then is the most appropriate moment for them to pray over the sick. For didn't Luke (4:40) write, "*After sunset all who had friends who were sick with various diseases brought them to Jesus; he placed his hands on everyone of them and healed them all.*" This interpretation has become a custom. It is the main reason why Zionists in Malawi meet on Sunday or Saturday afternoons. Jesus healed at all times, but the choice of the afternoon with healing prayers during sunset fits best to the rites' liminal character. The drums are busy again and people once more start to sing and dance. In the Zion Church (30), Luke 4:40 is read, this signals the sick to come forward. The healing rite demands a concerted effort of different offices: prophets and healers are busy; the *mlevi* stands by in case of difficulties. These officers are now with the sick, inside the circle, while the church sings and dances around them.

a. *Prophets and Zion's Concept of Sickness and Health*

In the Chipulumutso Zion Church (29), they start the healing ceremony by forming a circle around the patients. Prophets and prophetesses are singing and dancing while they approach the supplicants.¹³⁴ Then the revelations come. Also in the CCACZ, dancing around a sick person is "*the order of the day. It helps the prophets to get revelations from God.*"¹³⁵

¹³² Meredith B. McGuire, *Ritual Healing in Suburban America*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991, pp. 6ff.

¹³³ John Nindi, *Chirimba Christian Apostolic Church in Zion, Its Establishment, Organization and Beliefs*, Zomba: Kachere, 2006, p. 11.

¹³⁴ Int. Bishop S.B. Kasuzo Phiri and Harry Patson Phiri, Dombole, 1.3.2006.

¹³⁵ Int. Mayi Mpatse, CCACZ, Makata, Ndirande, 12.10.2006.

They say that “*Prophecy and revelations are brought about by beating the drums;*”¹³⁶ and, “*Dancing can cause prophecy.*”¹³⁷

It is now time to deal with a particular office in Zion, the prophet and the prophetess. The key word for their ministry is *admission*. As already described, prophets design the dresses of their fellow Zionists. There is no way to bypass the prophets on the way to Zion, for ultimately anybody wanting to join the church must be clad in a robe. They have thus been given power over each member’s outer expression, with symbols attached.

Zionists believe in communal purity and their prophets are the guardians of it. For the *Vapostoli*, Lucy Banda has expressed it most clearly, “*Prophets are the watchdogs of the Maranke congregations.*”¹³⁸ In almost all denominations, they cite or sing Proverbs 28:13 before the service starts: “*He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.*” After this, as for example a report from the Zion ya Bata (2) states, members can be found whispering words of reconciliation to each other.¹³⁹ Otherwise, “*healing may not be achieved.*”¹⁴⁰ In 2002, bishop Saguga (19) found the heavens brass when he tried to preach in a village in Ntcheu. He prayed over the situation and it was revealed to him that some members in the church held grudges against each other. The bishop then appealed to them, to which they responded with confessions and forgiving each other. After this, the atmosphere was totally changed and healings could take place.¹⁴¹

What has so far not been described is that the prophets have selective powers over who can participate in the meeting or not. (This is not the custom in all denominations, but in those who do, the concept of spiritual

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Int. *Mlevi* Kaulimbo, CCACZ, Bangwe, 18.10.2006.

¹³⁸ Lucy S. Banda, *The Masowe and Maranke Apostles in Malawi: Dynamics of the Entry, Growth, Development and Impact, 1950-2002*, MA, Zomba: University of Malawi, 2003, p. 42.

¹³⁹ Int. Bishop Moffat P. Lichapa, Zion ya Bata (2), Ntcheu, 14.10.2007.

¹⁴⁰ Int. Thomas Mlangeni, National General Secretary, Zion Church (30), Ndirande, 7.9.2006.

¹⁴¹ Int. Bishop S. Saguga, Wiwiza Saguga, New Jerusalem Zion Church (19), Jordan village, 7.3.2008.

and social admission through the prophets could not be better expressed.) The prophets inspect the members before the meeting commences. On occasion they ask if someone has something to confess, a sin which might have been committed during the week. At other times they point fingers at someone and accuse him or her of misbehaviour, thus claiming supernatural knowledge of hidden transgressions. Without repentance, the accused will not proceed to the meeting.¹⁴² At times the church sneers as the sins are mentioned, until the sinner shows first signs of contrition. They are, to be fair, also quick to welcome a penitent sinner back into their midst. Inspection by and confession to the prophet is part of healing therapies, too.¹⁴³ Supplicants with addiction problems, alcohol, cannabis or tobacco, have their weekly check-up in the form of confession here, which is undoubtedly nothing but long term monitoring.

Spiritual trespassing also happens in the form of harmful objects, which are placed with evil intent on the prayer grounds. According to the leader of the Zion Church (30), the objective for the prophets is the disclosure of evil forces that threaten the church. They have discovered, for example, bewitched fetishes which were buried at the prayer grounds. Moreover, the evildoers of such acts were identified, too.¹⁴⁴ Prophets thus guard Zion's gates.

During the healing process, prophecy is used at two stages: Prophetic utterances are used to "sniff out" the sickness, recognize it, give it a name and mention its cause.¹⁴⁵ Secondly, prophets prescribe the therapy and instruct the healers accordingly.

Seldom do the prophets ask the supplicant about the problem. In most cases, they wait for the inspiration to tell them what's wrong with the person. Should there be a communication, then any exchange is of course

¹⁴² Int. Mlevi Frank Jada, CCACZ, Bangwe, 17.10.2006.

¹⁴³ Karl Peltzer, *Some Contributions of Traditional Healing Practises towards Psychosocial Health Care in Malawi*, PhD, Universität Hannover, Sozialwissenschaftliche Fakultät, 1986, p. 220.

¹⁴⁴ Int. Thomas Mlangeni, National General Secretary, Zion Church (30), Ndirande, 12.8.2007.

¹⁴⁵ Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 66.

of private nature. Such consultations are screened from the audience by “a wall of sound.”¹⁴⁶

Now is the critical moment. The prophet strains his inner eyes in prayer to find the core and cause of the sickness. This is a conceptual concourse of metaphysical powers, Biblical values, pastoral concerns, evangelistic aims, cultural and local knowledge and African health philosophies. For whoever has control over the diagnosis, commands the concept of misfortune and evil.¹⁴⁷ In Zion, the prophets exercise healing through diagnosis and prescriptions. This happens on a day to day basis, although the denominations’ leaders have more of a say when it comes to the big issues. Prophets are the protagonists of Zion’s medical *system*. It is coherent in itself, but fragile at its margins, as we have seen in the previous chapter. The system is more than the sum of all elements mentioned above. Seen from the theological perspective, Becken wonders if physical healing does constitute an “African sacrament.”¹⁴⁸ I suspect that at least the first term is misplaced, for faith healing is not restricted to Africa. What are the underlying assumptions of Zion’s medical system?

In their thinking, health is not just a condition, but an indicator of spiritual attainment. I came to understand this only when visiting the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3). After being introduced to Feresi Chaluluka, one *mlevi* whispered reverentially into my ear, that this esteemed sister had never been to hospital. The reader might remember that Mrs. Chaluluka was not only the wife of late bishop Foster Chaluluka, but the daughter of Wilson Mtokoma, the founder of the HACZ in Malawi. Born and bred into Zionism and entrusted with leadership, Mrs. Chaluluka, at that time already in her eighties, is the personified ideal of what a believer should be. Health is the natural outcome and state of a Zionist,

¹⁴⁶ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990 p. 199.

¹⁴⁷ Steven Feierman, John M. Janzen, eds., *The Social Basis of Health & Healing in Africa*, Berkely: University of California, 1992, p. 18.

¹⁴⁸ Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 111.

who adheres to their way of life and abstains from the vices. Physical health thus becomes an indicator of spiritual maturity; it has become an embodied theological assumption.

Zionists are exilic people, the chosen remnant. They conceive themselves as being constantly under attack. Those malignant forces are, however, carefully distinguished within their broader spiritual dualism.¹⁴⁹ All our informants agreed that God never causes sickness. The personal causation of sickness is assumed, common to the region's traditional tenets.¹⁵⁰ People get sick because of their own sins, as one can hear in their sermons over and over again. The devil causes sickness; his demons make people sick. A bishop of Zion ya Bata (2) classified demons thus:¹⁵¹

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| i. evil spirits of cruelty | (<i>cha nkhanza</i>) |
| ii. evil spirits of confusion | (<i>cha chosokonezo</i>) |
| iii. evil spirits of blasphemy | (<i>cha mwano</i>) |
| iv. evil spirits of prostitution | (<i>cha uhule</i>) |

All Zionists believe that witchcraft is real and that evil people are out there to destroy their community and health. According to the Zion ya Bata (2), sickness can be caused by ancestral spirits, *ufiti* (witchcraft), evil spirits, powers of nature, impurity and sin; all these can cause malaise except God. Few informants believe that ancestors can cause sickness, just 20% of those asked. A certain woman came to attend the service one day and while in the church, she fell down; she was possessed by the ancestral spirits called *majini*. They prayed over her and she came back to her senses. At first they had thought she had been demon possessed, but the following day her husband came to testify that she was not

¹⁴⁹ Gloria Waite, "Public Health in Precolonial East Central Africa", in: Steven Feierman, John M. Janzen, eds., *The Social Basis of Health & Healing in Africa*, Berkely: University of California, 1992, p. 214.

¹⁵⁰ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol. 2, The Hague: Mouton, 1974, p. 197.

¹⁵¹ Int. Bishop Moffat P. Lichapa, Zion ya Bata (2), Ntcheu, 14.10.2007.

demonized but possessed by the spirits of her departed ancestors.¹⁵² This indicates that benevolent ancestral possession is clearly rejected within Zionism; the use of the Swahili word *majini* (a class of spirits in Islam) underlines their contempt for it.¹⁵³ Sometimes the prophets are at a loss, too, and will say that it „*just happened*.“¹⁵⁴ The Chinyanja phrase for the unfathomable is “*ndi Mulungu*” (it was God); a remark rather avoided by the Zionists. Nowadays the prophets are willing to ascribe certain diseases to physical causes, but they do so in front of a canvass filled with spiritual forces. Never minding the slow infiltration of medical and parasitical knowledge in Malawian society, the general approach to medicine is still religious.¹⁵⁵ Our case proves again that the history of healing and the history of religion in Africa are intertwined.¹⁵⁶

Several principles are in power when diagnosing. As ailments are more or less personalized, they will have to be addressed accordingly. We can hear a prophet smelling out “*the devil of flu*.” However, many of those expressions are made in the heat of the moment; one would search in vain for a polished demonology as mentioned above. So, sickness is personalized, but not always demonized. Personalization helps to assert the patient’s self over the sickness. Even in Europe, people nowadays ‘talk’ to their cancer, asserting themselves against their ailment, finding comfort in doing so.¹⁵⁷

Sin and sickness are not always separated in Zion. This means that someone is declared sick due to a personal lapse. Contrary to the *sing’anga*, Zion’s prophets do not lay the blame predominantly on other

¹⁵² Int. James Office, Senior Inspector, Zion ya Bata (2) and other leaders, Salima, 29.7.2007.

¹⁵³ Inspector Office’s view of the *majini* is unknowingly confirmed by Brian Morris, *Animals and Ancestors. An Ethnography*, Oxford: Berg, 2000, p. 245.

¹⁵⁴ Steven Feierman, John M. Janzen, eds., *The Social Basis of Health & Healing in Africa*, Berkely: University of California, 1992, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ Bodenstein, *African Medicine*, n.d., p. 52, in: Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 128.

¹⁵⁶ Steven Feierman, John M. Janzen, eds., *The Social Basis of Health & Healing in Africa*, Berkely: University of California, 1992, p. 4.

¹⁵⁷ BBC World Channel, 21.2.2009.

people, who might have bewitched the patient.¹⁵⁸ The possibility of such bewitching is not ruled out, but a Zionist of good standing would not need to bother about it. Why has, for example, an evil spell worked his way into the body of a believer? The remedy will not chiefly point to protection from someone on the outside, but to a re-commitment of the patient.

To the Zionists, any individual's sickness is yet an infringement on their communal unity and purity. A sick member has brought 'the world' into their circle; powers of mystic origin and demonic forces may find their way into the spiritual field. It is the prophets' responsibility to find the cause for the sickness, only then will the church know what kind of malevolent forces are up against them. Medical systems not only diagnose sicknesses, they define them first of all and, in some instances, create the ills they later seek to cure. Zionists are opposed to all diseases, infirmities, physical defects, disabilities, addictions and social afflictions, for Dowie's teaching had no place for any metaphysical dialectics. The mindset is triumphalism, often against the odds of reality. In addition, they have taken up the gauntlet against vices on which the Bible is ambivalent (alcohol) or silent (smoking). What unites these vices is their ability to serve as markers; their inherent evil is not their physical destruction, but social disruption; see chapter 6.

In their understanding, some sicknesses already point to their cause (but not all of them, as is the case e.g. among the Nuer of southern Sudan).¹⁵⁹ In cases of protracted labour during childbirth, they assume that there was a hidden transgression on part of the mother. Confession has to follow. Such suspicions are widespread in traditional medicoreligious practice.¹⁶⁰ Fraser observed that a prolonged pregnancy was commonly regarded as the result of adultery among the northern

¹⁵⁸ Allan Anderson, *Tumelo. The Faith of African Pentecostals in South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA, 1993, p. 82.

¹⁵⁹ Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1940, p. 200.

¹⁶⁰ William C. Willoughby, *The Soul of the Bantu*, Westport: Negro Universities Press, 1970, p. 375.

Ngoni.¹⁶¹ Such assumptions have found their way into Zionism and Malawian Pentecostalism, too.¹⁶²

Many sicknesses are ascribed to demonic influences. Exorcism is then called for. Bishop Makoko of the New Zion Church (15) once prayed over a mad person, and pinned the mental defects on demonic interference. He successfully exorcised the spirits, but the exercise subtracted all his powers. *“For half an hour, I was completely exhausted; it was as if someone had sucked all strength from me.”*¹⁶³ This reminds one of the healing recorded in Luke 8: 40ff, where Jesus felt a surge of power leaving him. Mrs Rute Mphepo of the Entopia Zion Church (28) fell under the power of evil spirits in 1979 at her home in Ngwenyama village, Neno. She displayed typical signs of spirit-possession, such as convulsions and hallucinating. She was healed through prayer and laying on of hands.¹⁶⁴ A certain Mr Thomas from Muwalo village, chief Njolomole, had become raving mad in the year 2000. Bishop Ngodzo of Chipiliro Zion Church (12) was called to the spot and cast the demons out.¹⁶⁵ Exorcism happens mainly through prayer, which is in most cases prolonged and accompanied by fasting. Dealing with demons is not only the duty of healers. Moreover, the rule that Zionists only pray over their kind is not applied in possession cases. Difficult cases call for authority higher in the church hierarchy and bishops and inspectors feature in the testimonies. Cases wherein demons manifested themselves during baptism are known in Malawian Zionism, although baptism as a therapeutic action against possession is not as widely practised in Malawi, in contrast to Zimbabwe and the *Vapositoli* churches.¹⁶⁶ Expulsion happens through commands in the name of Jesus. In the final struggle, the afflicted enters into

¹⁶¹ Markku Hokkanen, “Scottish Missionaries and African Healers: Perceptions and Relations in the Livingstonia Mission, 1875-1930”, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 34, no. 3, Leiden: Brill, 2004, p. 333.

¹⁶² Int. Rev. Dick Maclean, AFM, Ngodzi, 28.9.2000.

¹⁶³ Int. Bishop P.E. Makoko, Kaluzi, 28.2.2006.

¹⁶⁴ Int. Bishop Fraction Msalawatha Ngwenyama, Mbemba, 13.4.2006.

¹⁶⁵ Int. Bishop W. Ngodzo, Mazonda village, 11.1.2005.

¹⁶⁶ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol. 2, The Hague: Mouton, 1974, p. 240.

convulsions or ‘coughs them out.’¹⁶⁷ Such prayer struggles can be over in an instant; the afflicted can be cared for in healing homes or prayer clinics for a longer time as well.

The prophets trace mental sickness almost always to evil spirits (as does a big part of the non-Zionist population). *Mlevi* Masina, referring to the men of Gadarene, after Jesus had cast the demons out of them, preached, “*We may rightly say that these men were like mad people because of the evil spirits that were inside their hearts.*”¹⁶⁸ In Africa, people are not more or less disposed to mental illness as elsewhere in the world. For Ghana, research has shown that economic insecurity, not westernization or urbanization, is the main reason for some to ‘crack’ under pressure.¹⁶⁹ In Malawi, the majority of spirit-stricken people are women. Common markers among them are difficult domestic circumstances and that they are still in child-bearing age. Yet Zion offers more than the rite of exorcism to those who are mentally disturbed. Their health system with its underlying theology provides meaning.¹⁷⁰ To counter social disruption, Zion’s preachers speak fiercely against all vices that disrupt families. Different social schemes within the church, see chapter 6, provide at least a little economic security. The church as such is an offer to join a humanizing community, which provides fellowship and security to its members.¹⁷¹

Most prophetic activity takes place during the meetings. Apart from that, prophets and healers have a visitation ministry to those who cannot walk to the meetings any longer. The adherents of a local CCACZ will move in procession to the house of a sick member, accompanied by loud

¹⁶⁷ Ulf Strohhahn, *Physical Healing and Exorcism in Malawian Pentecostal Churches*, Zomba: University of Malawi, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, 2000, p. 4.

¹⁶⁸ *Mlevi* Masina, sermon, CCACZ (1), Kampala, Blantyre, 2.7.2006

¹⁶⁹ Leith Mullings, *Therapy, Ideology and Social Change: Mental Healing in Urban Ghana*, Berkeley, 1984.

¹⁷⁰ Claude Lévi-Strauss, “The Effectiveness of Symbols”, in: *Structural Anthropology*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973.

¹⁷¹ Cephas N. Omenyo, “Essential Aspects of African Ecclesiology: The Case of the African Independent Churches”, *Pneuma*, Cleveland: Society for Pentecostal Studies, vol. 22, no. 2, 2000, p. 237.

drumming and clapping. Upon arrival, they will start dancing and invite the patient, should he still be able to do so, to join the circle. The dancing can take many hours, infused with Bible readings and prayers.¹⁷² Dreams and visions either prepare the prophets for the meeting or enable them to a more mobile ministry. A report from Chipulumutso Zion church (29) says that in 2004, at Ngaiyaye village, chief Ganya in Ntcheu, Stephen George was filled with the Holy Spirit and the Lord showed him a young child, very sick, which was carried on the back of her mother. He heard God tell him to go to the child and pray over her. She was instantly healed after he had arrived there and prayed over her.¹⁷³

b. Healers, Therapies and Healing Aids

After diagnosis, the prophets point out the remedy or therapy of the ailment. They prescribe prayers, confessions, sprinkling with holy water and a host of other treatments. In most cases, the prophet's task ends there, it's up to the healers to administer the prescription and lay hands on the sick.

The offices of healer and prophet are usually separated, providing for a division of powers. If not, then such a man or woman will have tremendous influence, as is the case with Elisa Nawa in the CCACZ at Joseph village, Chimutu, Lilongwe.¹⁷⁴ Mrs Chenjerani is another prominent prophetess / healer in the Ifa-Ifa church (4). Other exceptions are in some CCACZ classes, where both, healers and prophets, are entitled to pray over people.¹⁷⁵ In the ZCC (8), all members are allowed to lay hands on supplicants as long as they are of the same sex and not higher in the church hierarchy.

Two requirements are made by the Ifa-ifa church (4) for those administering and those receiving healing: sick people must confess and

¹⁷² Stansfield Kazokoko, "Malingaka Church: A Case Study of an Independent Church which Seceded from the CCACZ", Zomba: Chancellor College, Department of TRS, 1980, p. 4.

¹⁷³ Int. Bishop S.B. Kasuzo Phiri and Harry Patson Phiri, Dombale, 1.3.2006.

¹⁷⁴ Int. *Mlevi* Frackson N.J. Nawa and other leaders of the CCACZ, Joseph village, Chimutu, 14.5.2008.

¹⁷⁵ Int. *Mlevi* Thomas W. Kayenda, Msangu, 28.7.2007.

repent in order to be healed and the healer must be filled with the Holy Spirit.¹⁷⁶ In the New Jerusalem Church (19), and this applies in theory to all denominations, those administering healing have to abstain from sexual relations three days prior and for three days after the service.¹⁷⁷ One difference between healers and prophets is that the former usually come across as 'warmer' and more empathetic personalities, while the latter make a more ethereal and intangible impression. Healers care; this character trait attracts people to them.¹⁷⁸

Healers undergo an informal apprenticeship, which is more or less 'on the job training.' Three stages can be observed: Similar to Biblical and traditional healing figures, the Zionist will start his career upon a divine



¹⁷⁶ Int. Harod Kanyamphula, Chenjerani Laison, Lumbadzi trading centre and Mkwinda village, Kayembe, Dowa, 28., 29.5.2008.

¹⁷⁷ Int. Bishop S. Saguga, Wiwiza Saguga, New Jerusalem Zion Church (19), Jordan village, 7.3.2008.

¹⁷⁸ Caleb Z. Mutingwende, *The Church of God in Zimbabwe*, www.aic_research@yahoo.com, 15.3.2006.

spark, which comes to him through dreams or visions (this has been observed in South Africa, too).¹⁷⁹ All interviewees stressed that it was not their idea to become a healer; ultimately, their calling came from God. This important trait is sometimes asserted to such a degree that the person reports to have involuntarily entered this ministry. There often follows a 'desert' period, a crisis, wherein he experiences rejection or self-doubts, until he enters the third stage, which is the supernatural confirmation of his healing abilities. None will be an established healer or prophet in the church unless a fair success rate backs him up. Extraordinary healings, say miracles, help to boost a healer's reputation. There have been prominent healers within Zionism in Malawi. However, all healers are seen as intercessors. They are dependent on God and subject to the churches' hierarchy, so they play a subordinate role at the end of the day.

The healing experienced by those people did not belong to me, I have nothing in my own hands to heal anybody's life...there is nothing for me but Jehovah the living God whose hand has the power to heal in order that His name Jehovah must be praised wherever the person goes, hallelujah.¹⁸⁰

Above all, since God alone can heal, prayer is believed to be the chief instrument in this. All patients are prayed over. Other means are understood to be carriers of prayer and blessings: touch, oil, holy water, cloths, sticks and staffs. This emphasis on intercession and ultimate reference to God marks Zion's contraposition to magic and biomedicine. For independence from the Supreme Being is interpreted as defection. Prayers are not uniform; they cannot be prescribed in quantity, as is the case in the RCC. Yet they believe that some intercession needs time, a trait that has come down to them through John G. Lake. Hence the

¹⁷⁹ Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, London: Oxford University Press, 1948, p. 61.

¹⁸⁰ Minister Chilowa Banda, ZCC (8), sermon, Majiga, Ndirande, Blantyre, 9.7.2006.

establishment of prayer rooms, spiritual hospitals and, in the course of time, Zion settlements. Apart from intercession, healers use ritual language as a potent carrier of healing power. “*M’dzina la Yesu*” (*In the Name of Jesus*) can probably be heard most often, other forms are pronounced blessings and commands for evil spirits to go.

The most common healing rite is by laying on of hands. Healers are sometimes gentle and hardly touch the supplicant’s head; at other times they massage, shake and quiver up and down over the patient. There is no merit ascribed to this stirring itself; it is but an outward expression of the intercessor’s labour in prayer. Many patients are too sick to join the prophet’s dance, while others stand still in a state of reverence and expectation. Should the supplicant himself join the dancing, which is welcome, then such an act would be regarded as the first accomplished stage of the healing process.

The bishop’s staff is used as an extension of the man himself. People are touched with it when direct contact is not feasible or appropriate. In most churches, the healer will not lay hands on a woman and so he touches her with the rod instead.¹⁸¹ Following regional and ecclesiastic lore, the staff is an insignia of heirship and leadership.¹⁸² Most leaders across the Zionist denominations in Malawi carry rods. Some of them were former curtain sticks, others are spiritually designed and carefully crafted, as can be seen in chapter 3 with Bishop Kandodo of the Apositoli Zion Church (16). I doubt whether the staff by itself “*is a weapon through which mystical powers flow*” in the Zionists understanding.¹⁸³ Becken goes so far as to assume the staff to have originated with traditional healers, which was poked into the grass huts of their supplicants. This he has observed among the Zulu (of South Africa) and concludes that this custom turned into the prayer sticks among the Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Int. Bishop G.G. Kandodo (16), Chileka, 8.8.2004.

¹⁸² Caleb Z. Mutingwende, *The Church of God in Zimbabwe*, www.aic_research-yahoogle.com, 15.3.2006.

¹⁸³ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990, p. 24.

¹⁸⁴ „Gewisse izinyanga trugen einen Speer bei sich, den sie nahe beim Kranken in das Grasdach der Hütte steckten; bei den AUK is daraus der Stock (isikhali)... geworden, der sich schon

Such an assumption is indeed not orthodox. Zionists understand God to be the source of all healing. Everything and everybody else is but a channel, which can be attributed with failure, but never with success in the healing ritual. Staffs are therefore not seen as magic wands but as transmitters of prayer.

Water is the most common medium through which blessings are believed to flow. It is seen as a means of transport, for it “*brings the prayer into all parts of the body.*”¹⁸⁵ Most Zionist churches have come to use water as a healing tool (baptism is discussed in chapter 5). The element has been interpreted in the African and Biblical traditions and Zionists make ample use of it. From the Bible, they quote Naaman the leper, who had to dip seven times in the Jordan. Another example is the healing of the man at Siloam, where there was a pool. Water is used either by sprinkling it onto the supplicant (not unlike the RCC tradition) or by drinking it.¹⁸⁶ The water has to be declared ritually holy. This is mostly done by the bishop touching it with his staff. In the Zion ya Bata (2) only bishops are allowed to administer the water.¹⁸⁷ For some rites in the ZCC (8), Lake Malawi water is required.¹⁸⁸ Such water has not, so they say, been touched by an animal and is therefore apt to remove evil spirits. This reminded me of similar views which the Zulu hold concerning water from the Indian Ocean.¹⁸⁹ In the ZCC (8), this formula is spoken over any water used for ritual purposes:

God of Edward Barnabas Legkanyane,
I bless this water
that everyone who comes here

in der Orthodoxen Kirche in Äthiopien als Gebetsstock findet...“ Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 135.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 76.

¹⁸⁶ Int. Mlevi Thomas T.W. Kayenda, Zion ya Bata (2), Msangu, 28.7.2007.

¹⁸⁷ Int. James Office, Senior Inspector, Zion ya Bata (2) and other leaders, Salima, 29.7.2007.

¹⁸⁸ Karl Peltzer, *Some Contributions of Traditional Healing Practises towards Psychosocial Health Care in Malawi*, PhD, Universität Hannover, Sozialwissenschaftliche Fakultät, 1986, p. 225.

¹⁸⁹ Axel-Ivar Berglund, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989, p. 101.

should be healed in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.
I will sprinkle clean water upon you
and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness
and from all your idols I will cleanse you.¹⁹⁰

Certain ailments call for internal treatment, water is seen as a carrier of prayer and the Holy Spirit to those areas in the body. The patients often drink while the healers lay hands on them and pray over them, as happens in the New Jerusalem Zion Church (19).¹⁹¹ In the CCACZ, they make sure that the patient drinks the water publicly, only then “*are most results positive.*”¹⁹²

In the ZCC (8) a fluid therapy is prescribed to addicts. The course takes 42 days to complete. Supplicants have to drink different amounts of water, which is at the beginning mixed with salt. Later they are to swallow tea, coffee, oil and milk.¹⁹³ Peltzer has described and medically analysed this kind of therapy.¹⁹⁴ Some physiological effects of the liquid therapy do indeed help the patients and the overall track record of former addicts is slightly better than in non-religious programmes. In this case, the therapy has a traceable medical effect, as huge amounts of liquid detoxicate the body. In addition, water is given spiritual significance by the church, which the believer literally takes in.

The drinking has yet another, rather unmentioned meaning. What if a prophet prescribes drinking in case of adultery? Water is then internally applied for cooling down.¹⁹⁵ This is done for those parts of the body which are ritually hot. A hot state, in the reginal worldview, is a state wherein a

¹⁹⁰ Karl Peltzer, *Some Contributions of Traditional Healing Practises towards Psychosocial Health Care in Malawi*, PhD, Universität Hannover, Sozialwissenschaftliche Fakultät, 1986, p. 222.

¹⁹¹ Int. Bishop S. Saguga, Wiwiza Saguga, New Jerusalem Zion Church (19), Jordan village, 7.3.2008.

¹⁹² Int. *Mlevi* Kaulimbo, CCACZ, Bangwe, 18.10.2006.

¹⁹³ Dawid Venter, ed., *Engaging Modernity*, Westport: Praeger, 2004, pg. 17.

¹⁹⁴ Karl Peltzer, *Some Contributions of Traditional Healing Practises towards Psychosocial Health Care in Malawi*, PhD, Universität Hannover, Sozialwissenschaftliche Fakultät, 1986, pp. 220ff.

¹⁹⁵ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990 p. 107.

person is sexually active. Malevolent powers can be released when hot and cold states come into contact, e.g. when a sexually active person touches a new born baby.¹⁹⁶

In addition, a healer exposes himself to malignant forces. Water, as much as it transmits blessings, is also seen as a barrier which protects the healer from impurities and hostile forces. Reports from the ZCC (8) even describe how holy water has been poured into car radiators for protective purposes.¹⁹⁷

Protective strips of cloth and strings are condemned as heathenish by some churches. In Ifa-ifa (4), with their CCAP background, they only use oil.¹⁹⁸ Yet other denominations employ an arsenal of strings for protection against demonic attacks and sicknesses. Bishop Saguga (19) recommends them, calling them 'ephod.'¹⁹⁹ Caution is taken when an elder in the Zion Church (30) prays for a female patient. He does not stand very close to her. A string is used that goes around the waist of the woman. The elder lays his right hand onto the woman's head, while the left hand holds one end of the string. In this way, so they believe, the whole body of the patient is covered with prayers.²⁰⁰ More drastic is the practice in the New Jerusalem Zion Church (19). They cover the whole body of the sick with a cloth, thus enveloping them symbolically with prayers.²⁰¹ However, direct contact goes both ways. Modesty is taken care of, but, as is the case with water, the rite serves to protect the healer, too.

¹⁹⁶ Joseph DeGabriele, "When Pills don't Work - African Illnesses, Misfortune and Mdulo", in: Joseph C. Chakanza, ed., *Religion in Malawi*, Zomba: University of Malawi, no. 9, 1999, pp. 9-23.

¹⁹⁷ Allan Anderson, Samuel Otwang, *Tumelo. The Faith of African Pentecostals in South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA, 1993, p. 76.

¹⁹⁸ Int. Harod Kanyamphula, Chenjerani Liaison, Lumbadzi trading centre and Mkwinda village, Kayembe, Dowa, 28., 29.5.2008.

¹⁹⁹ Int. Bishop S. Saguga, Wiwiza Saguga, New Jerusalem Zion Church (19), Jordan village, 7.3.2008.

²⁰⁰ Int. Thomas Mlangeni, National General Secretary, Zion Church (30), Ndirande, 12.8.2007.

²⁰¹ Int. Bishop S. Saguga, Wiwiza Saguga, New Jerusalem Zion Church (19), Jordan village, 7.3.2008.

The Zion Christian Church (8) has already been mentioned frequently in this chapter. Their healing system is the most varied among all Zionists in the country. Holy oils and water, blessed cloths and papers are sent from Moriah headquarters to Malawi. Sometimes the bishop in South Africa even sends a piece of hard wood, which is then laid on the afflicted body parts. Every member has the authority to pray over the sick. This is preluded by a silent prayer in which the intercessor tries to receive the cure for the sickness prophetically. Holy water is sprinkled on all believers as they enter and exit the services. The ZCC allows coffee and they see it as medicine, which is prescribed by the prophets to anemic people.²⁰² Most Zionists in Malawi see coffee as an addictive, but the ZCC considers it as their transnational duty to drink the beverage. Their church in South Africa is a coffee producer, and a fresh cup of “*Zion Perfect*” coffee and chicory mixture cannot harm. Within the church, members are prescribed different diets to facilitate the healing process. A prophet may, for example, order a patient to eat fish fat. Included are often symbolic healing rites. The remains of the same fish are ordered to be thrown back into the river, thus showing that the disease has left. Traditional religious practises in the country know of similar rituals, e.g. the *chilulu ceremony* in the Lower Shire Valley. This lettuce like water plant is believed to symbolically take sickness away, as it floats down the river. Prior to this, the afflicted person will have strewn a few husks of maize onto the plant, which will in due time be eaten by fish.²⁰³ As with many Zionist traditions, a parallel can be found in the Bible, which, if it isn’t the originator of the rite, will at least serve as its legitimization: the Azazel ‘scapegoat’ is sent into the desert, thus carrying away the sins of the people; Leviticus 16:5ff.

Not all denominations use flags but most hoist banners to declare a sacred space. Flags play a prominent role in the Jordan Zion ya Bata Church (5). They believe that “*the air can be cleaned*” by swinging their banners.²⁰⁴ Flags are a means against evil spirits. We visited *Mdindo Diele*

²⁰² Minister Chilowa Banda, ZCC (8), sermon, Majiga, Ndirande, Blantyre, 9.7.2006.

²⁰³ Matthew Schoffeleers, *Mang'anja Traditional Religion*, Zomba: Kachere, 2008, pp. 368f

²⁰⁴ Int. *Mdindo Diele* (5), M’gubo, Dowa, 7.10.2008.

at his house in M'gubo village, chief Mkukula in Dowa district. Right there stood a long pole with a Zion flag raised high. This is a healing device. Church leader Diele told that some years ago he had fallen sick and all healing prayers were to no avail. Then a prophetess from Phatisa village received a revelation that a flag would be the answer to the man's problem. Things were done according to the prophetess' instructions and Diele got healed the moment the flag started fluttering above his house.²⁰⁵

c. *Traditional Healing*

"Prophet Harris' converts, it is said,
pressed the Prophet to give a course of action when they were sick –
he had already described traditional healing as
'nothing' if one believes in God.
His reply was, in effect, take native medicine if you have to,
but while you gather the leaves, pray to God; while you prepare the
medicine, pray to God;
when you take it, pray to God."²⁰⁶

Healing has always been a spiritual exercise in traditional African worldview. The healer is seeking an operative relationship with spirits, forces and materials which are needed in the process.²⁰⁷ This is one of the biggest differences in comparison with the biomedical approach: in African health systems, the operators do not simply acquire knowledge. They try to spiritually animate the forces that support or prevent healing.²⁰⁸ This struggle is therefore played out on a wider field, not just at the patient's bedside.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Gordon M. Haliburton, "The Prophet Harris: A Study of an African Prophet and His Mass Movement in the Ivory Coast and the Gold Coast, 1913-1915," New York: Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 54; in: Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000, p. 98.

²⁰⁷ Harry G. West, Tracy J. Luedke, eds., "Healing Divides: Therapeutic Border Work in Southeast Africa", in: *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 9.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

The Ngoni had brought their doctors with them from the south. In addition, they absorbed healers and healing customs of the lands they travelled through and eventually adopted Tumbuka cults, too.²⁰⁹ Their healing philosophy is in line with the regional world view. It was imperative to find the source of any ailment, for the belief was that each infringement on health was ultimately caused by tension and disruption in social relationships.²¹⁰ Fraser collected five different explanations for sickness and suffering among the Ngoni: natural causes, actions of sorcerers, sins (especially adultery and poisoning), hostile spirits and demon possession.²¹¹ Such manifold hostile forces called for different medical specialists. Among the Central Ngoni, Read found the diviners (who were in touch with the spirit world), witch finders and herbalists.

In cases of sickness, the patient or his relatives would start with the less serious assumption and consult the herbalist. The Chinyanja word *sing'anga* means healer, but always in the traditional sense. The word is used throughout the southern African region, most often in the form of *nganga*.²¹² The Ngoni had and have herbalist living in villages and towns. More established healers draw their clientel from an ever widening geographic range, which can easily surpass national boundaries. Among the Tumbuka and Northern Ngoni, the *asing'anga* are responsible for lesser ailments, while the *nchimi*, the prophet healer, is in charge of all spirit-induced *nthenda*, sicknesses. In the absence of any comparable role, the healer performs functions which belong to the priests in other cultures. The first missionaries among the Ngoni reported that the people's dependence on these medicoreligious healers, who were the

²⁰⁹ Steven M. Friedson, *Dancing Prophets*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 191.

²¹⁰ Axel-Ivar Berglund, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989, p. 348.

²¹¹ Donald Fraser, *Winning a Primitive People*, London: Seeley, 1914, pp. 139ff. Markku Hokkanen, "Scottish Missionaries and African Healers: Perceptions and Relations in the Livingstonia Mission, 1875-1930", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 34, no. 3, Leiden: Brill, 2004, p. 331.

²¹² Steven Feierman, "Ethnographic Regions – Healing, Power and History", in: Harry G. West, Tracy J. Luedke, eds., *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 191.

channel of communication with the spirits, was unlimited.²¹³ Divination was a national institution among the Ngoni. Diviners operated on the basis of ancestral spirit possession.²¹⁴ Their qualifying experience was called *ukuthwasa*. It began with strong physical discomforts, culminating in fainting. Dreams followed wherein a spirit made himself known by name and assured the woman that she was henceforth a medium (most of the mediums were married women, 90% in total²¹⁵). “*Dreams are a very important instrument through which the shades call their servants.*”²¹⁶ Those women prophesied by foretelling future events and by interpreting the meaning and purpose of mischiefs. They often dreamed, and used lots or their own charms to read hidden things. They could fall into a trance when contacting an ancestral spirit; songs, chanting and dancing helped in this.²¹⁷ The most powerful diviners would not only interpret the messages from the spirits, but try to argue with them and thus change fate’s course. The diviner did not work on and off the job; she experienced the constant “brooding” of the spirits over her life. Therefore, they usually lived withdrawn and would shun most village routine in fear of transgressing some taboo. Hardly anybody, so Lee found out for the Zulu, wanted to be a diviner. “*No. Possession by the ancestors is an unpleasant life.*”²¹⁸

The pattern of a healing home, which Dowie established in the USA and John G. Lake carried to South Africa,²¹⁹ was already functioning in

²¹³ Markku Hokkanen, “Scottish Missionaries and African Healers: Perceptions and Relations in the Livingstonia Mission, 1875-1930”, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 34, no. 3, Leiden: Brill, 2004, p. 324.

²¹⁴ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 179.

²¹⁵ S.G. Lee, “Spirit Possession among the Zulu”. In: John Beattie, John Middleton, eds., *Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa*, New York: African Publishing, 1969, pp. 132, 139.

²¹⁶ Axel-Ivar Berglund, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989, p. 136.

²¹⁷ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 182.

²¹⁸ S.G. Lee, “Spirit Possession among the Zulu”. In: John Beattie, John Middleton, eds., *Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa*, New York: African Publishing, 1969, p. 148.

²¹⁹ Isak M. Burger, *A Perspective on the History of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa*, PhD, Johannesburg: AFM Theological Seminary, 1999, p. 6.

African societies before their time. For many centuries, rainmaking and healing shrines had been fixed institutions in Africa, often cutting across political boundaries, like the Mbona cult in the south.²²⁰ Famous healers among the Ngoni required their patients to stay with them at their kraals.²²¹ This served many purposes. The patients found it hard to travel due to their sickness and were relieved to stay at their place of treatment. The healer, on the other hand, was glad to have a community established around him (or her), which relied on him and, at the same time, provided for his daily needs.

The people in this region have always linked their dancing to the cosmic and mystic forces that make up their universe (this is the reason why the Ngoni chief Mpezeni II never allowed a white man to see him dance²²²). Among the Chewa of Malawi, the most important means of communicating with the ancestors is a dance, *gule wamkulu*.²²³ The *mashawi* dance among the Chewa of Likoma Island functions to rid the performer of demons.²²⁴ Further examples from different areas and ethnic groups of Malawi all give evidence that dancing was and is a means of contacting the spirit world; among the Tumbuka²²⁵ and with the Man'ganja and the Sena, too.²²⁶ It is through dancing that the Bimbi, the aforementioned traditional rain maker in the Upper Shire Valley, is being

²²⁰ Matthew Schoffeleers, "The History and Political Role of the M'Bona Cult among the Mang'anja", in: Terence O. Ranger, I.N. Kimambo, eds., *The Historical Study of African Religions*, London: Heinemann, 1972, pp. 73-94. Steven Feierman, "Ethnographic Regions – Healing, Power and History", in: Harry G. West, Tracy J. Luedke, eds., *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 192.

²²¹ John A. Barnes, *The Fort Jameson Ngoni*, n. d., p. 220.

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 243.

²²³ Martin Ott, *African Theology in Images*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2000, pp. 165, 450. For more detailed information on *gule wamkulu* see: Johan W.M. van Breugel, *Chewa Traditional Religion*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2001, ch. 5. Matthew Schoffeleers, *Guardians of the Land*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1999, pp. 160, 216.

²²⁴ James N. Amanze, *African Traditional Religion in Malawi, The Case of the Bimbi Cult*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2002, p. 59.

²²⁵ Silas S. Ncozana, *The Spirit Dimension in African Christianity*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2002, p. 10.

²²⁶ Matthew Schoffeleers, *Religion and the Dramatization of Life*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2002.

possessed by his ancestral spirits.²²⁷ Dancing induces spirit possession, especially through movements to the strong beat of a drum.²²⁸

Ancestors are held to have influence over one's health. They can be contacted and appeased through music. The logical outcome are vocal and rhythmic healing cults, which are present on this continent. The so called (healing) cults of affliction are a phenomenon, which can be found from the Zulu²²⁹ in the south to the Lemba²³⁰ on the Atlantic coast to the Tumbuka in the north of Malawi and further on. Some argue that these are common to the entire Bantu population of Africa, which would indeed cover an area from Cameroon to South Africa.²³¹

The Nguni, back in Natal, had a healing rite, wherein the *amandawe* doctors instructed the dancers until at last the ancestral spirits manifested themselves.²³² However, the people lost this part of their healing tradition during the *mfecane*. One reason for this is that all ancestral cults are based on locality, which of course does not fit the nomadic life. Instead, the paramount, trekking with them, was given an elevated spiritual status. The Ngoni settled in the second half of the 19th century in the north and in the central regions of Malawi. From there, a significant difference developed between traditional healing among the Northern Ngoni and those in the Central Region. This difference is yet another reason why Zionism was so successful in the central parts of the country, but not in the north.

Among the Tumbuka in the north, the possession dance is called *vimbuza*. The term itself has several meanings. It is a dance, a state of spirit possession and the different spirits, which can appear, are called

²²⁷ James N. Amanze, *African Traditional Religion in Malawi, The Case of the Bimbi Cult*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2002, p. 59.

²²⁸ Richard J. Gehman, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective*, Nairobi: East African Publishers, 1993, p. 160.

²²⁹ H. Ngubane, *Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine*, London: Academic Press, 1977.

²³⁰ John M. Janzen, *Lemba 1650-1930: A Drum of Affliction in Africa and the New World*, New York: Garland, 1982.

²³¹ Steven Feierman, John M. Janzen, eds., *The Social Basis of Health & Healing in Africa*, Berkely: University of California, 1992, p. 170.

²³² S.G. Lee, "Spirit Possession among the Zulu", in: John Beattie, John Middleton, eds., *Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa*, New York: African Publishing, 1969, p. 132.

vimbuza, too.²³³ Patients are instructed to dance their sickness, with the help of drums that cause them to switch to a different spiritual mode. Early missionary records show that the Northern Ngoni adapted *vimbuza* elements,²³⁴ in turn the dance absorbed Ngoni traits, too. One *vimbuza* spirit is called *vyanusi*, and is said to belong to Ngoni warriors. When this spirit possesses someone, he will dance Ngoni style, closely associated to those dances which were performed at the royal kraal.²³⁵ Protagonists in these cults of affliction among the Tumbuka are aware that they are able to serve needs, which western medicine cannot even address.²³⁶ *Vimbuza* became the healing cult for Ngoni in the north, but no ritual like this has become available for Gomani's Ngoni of Ntcheu. The dominant spirit dance in the area, the Chewa *gule wamkulu*, has hardly been adapted by the Ngoni; moreover, while the dance has some therapeutic effect on psychosomatic illnesses, it's emphasis is not on physical healing.²³⁷

To summarize it, at the dawn of Zionism in Malawi, the Ngoni people around Ntcheu had no available traditional medical system with which to heal spirit-induced sicknesses. What about other medical means?

²³³ Boston J. Soko, *The Vimbuza Phenomenon: Disease or Art*, Zomba: Chancellor College, French Department, occasional paper, 1981. Steven M. Friedson, *Dancing Prophets*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 12.

²³⁴ Markku Hokkanen, "Scottish Missionaries and African Healers: Perceptions and Relations in the Livingstonia Mission, 1875-1930", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 34, no. 3, Leiden: Brill, 2004, p. 329.

²³⁵ Steven M. Friedson, *Dancing Prophets*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 15f.

²³⁶ Boston Soko, Nchimi Chikanga. *The Battle against Witchcraft in Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2002, p. 53.

²³⁷ Brian Morris, *Animals and Ancestors. An Ethnography*, Oxford: Berg, 2000, p. 150. Int. Archbishop Kanjere (14), Blantyre, 18.4.2005.

d. Colonial Medicine

Her Majesty's health officers strove to keep
"a segregated European section upwind from the African town."²³⁸

This section brings us back to the *machona*, who pioneered Zionism and Pentecostalism upon their return to Malawi. Zion's medical system arrived at and developed in the migrant workers' milieu. Moreover, the colonial era supplies this study with two important margins to Zion's health system: the mainline churches' stand regarding faith healing and the Zionists' encounter with biomedicine.

Against a background of population growth between the years 1880 (543,000) and 1920 (1,250,000), Malawi went through shorter periods of actual population decline, especially from 1904 (990,000) to 1911 (947,000).²³⁹ This is the strongest indicator of moribund health during that era, especially if compared to other countries in the region. Malawi had, for example, no major revolt, as was the case in Tanzania, where 175,000 people died in the Maji-Maji revolt between 1905 and 1907, according to a conservative estimate.²⁴⁰ In Malawi, people died because the new system itself was at fault. Migration labour and declining health, interrelated as they are, meant that more people died than were born.²⁴¹ With, on average, almost half of the able-bodied male population abroad, the rest of the country could not be healthy.²⁴² Things did not improve while the men spent their furlough at home, for the main cause for sterility was syphilis and gonorrhea, which spread from the mine

²³⁸ Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness*, Stanford: University Press, 1991, p. 38.

²³⁹ <http://www.populstat.info/Africa/malawic.htm>. 8.4.2009.

²⁴⁰ <http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/warstat3.htm>. 8.4.2009.

²⁴¹ Steven Feierman, John M. Janzen, eds., *The Social Basis of Health & Healing in Africa*, Berkely: University of California, 1992, p.33.

²⁴² Robert B. Boeder, *Malawians Abroad. The History of Labour Emigration from Malawi to its Neighbors, 1890 to the Present*, PhD, Michigan State University, 1974, pp. 124, 136. J. C. Abraham, *Report on the Nyasaland Natives in the Union of South Africa and in Southern Rhodesia*, London: Published for the Government of Nyasaland, 1937, p. 3.

compounds into the rural homelands. In some areas, more than a quarter of the child-bearing women suffered from syphilis, which resulted in miscarriages, still-births, sterility, frequently followed by divorce.²⁴³ Inflation was rampant, making it impossible for the average consumer to afford more than life's necessities. Later, due to World War II, the cost of living for an African dwelling in an urban area in Malawi had risen 100% between 1939 and 1947.²⁴⁴

The colonial set up literally sucked the life out of the population. Europeans brought sicknesses to the continent; most prominent was tuberculosis, which became the main killer in Africa. Measles were imported from Europe. Another case was the influenza pandemic of 1918/19, which caused the death of an estimated two million people in Sub-Saharan Africa.²⁴⁵ Patterson and Pyle found out that the disease travelled comfortably through the region on Cecil Rhodes' newly constructed railway.²⁴⁶ Relapsing fever was a result of moving migrant workers, who were housed in appalling conditions. It reached epidemic proportions in the beginning of the 20th century, but receded when motorized transport became more common. In the 1930s, many migrant workers battled for their lives when cerebro-spinal meningitis broke out on an epidemic scale in the south of Malawi. The Director of Medical Services stressed that what was needed was "*not additional legislation but improved social conditions.*"²⁴⁷

²⁴³ Shula Marks, Neil Andersson, "Industrialization, Rural Health, and the 1944 National Health Services Commission in South Africa", in: Steven Feierman, John M. Janzen, eds., *The Social Basis of Health & Healing in Africa*, Berkely: University of California, 1992, p. 137.

²⁴⁴ Megan Vaughan, "Famine Analysis and Family Relations: Nyasaland in 1949", in: Steven Feierman, John M. Janzen, eds., *The Social Basis of Health and Healing in Africa*, Berkely: University of California, 1992, p. 82.

²⁴⁵ http://virus.stanford.edu/uda/_ 12.4.2009. At least 20 million people are thought to have died worldwide.

²⁴⁶ K.D. Patterson, G.F. Pyle, "The Diffusion of Influenza in Sub-Saharan Africa during the 1918 – 1919 Pandemic", *Social Science and Medicine*, n.d. vol. 17, 1983, pp. 1299-1307.

²⁴⁷ Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness*, Stanford: University Press, 1991, p. 47.

The Europeans had little clues about African ecology. For example, they tried to eradicate the tsetse-fly, not aware that the population had for hundreds of years managed cattle production by keeping carefully controlled wilderness areas around populated territories. By destroying such customs, the Europeans caused the spread of disease and suffering, “*whilst they saw themselves as the saviours from the same.*”²⁴⁸

The colonial sickness was tuberculosis.²⁴⁹ At the beginning of the 19th century, it was hardly known in southern Africa. A Blantyre Mission doctor, Neil McVicar, working in the Shire Highlands between 1896 and 1900 stated that he had not come across a single case of ‘consumption,’ as tuberculosis was known then.²⁵⁰ A generation later, it had become epidemic. Its rise and spread was, like in Europe, a by-product of industrialization and had become its “*first penalty.*”²⁵¹ Some areas in South Africa had an estimate of 75% of the black population ‘tuberculized’ in the 1940s.²⁵² Observers remarked sarcastically that better conditions for the spread of tuberculosis could hardly be created. With this they meant the abysmally poor housing conditions for mine workers. They were frequently drenched in sweat or drill-water as they came out of the belly of the earth. Soaked like this, they had to wait for hours for the elevator or buses to come and carry them to the compound. Plenty of men shared a small sleeping barrack, wherein overcrowding and poor ventilation created an ideal environment for the disease to flourish. The poor diet contributed to the overall weak condition of the *machona*. This was caused by the food offered, often insufficient, rotten and with

²⁴⁸ John Ford, *The Role of Trypanosomiasis in African Ecology: A Study of the Tsetse-fly Problem*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1971.

²⁴⁹ Steven Feierman, John M. Janzen, eds., *The Social Basis of Health & Healing in Africa*, Berkely: University of California, 1992, p. 5.

²⁵⁰ Randall M. Packard, “Industrialization, Rural Poverty, and Tuberculosis in South Africa, 1850 – 1950”, in: Steven Feierman, John M. Janzen, eds., *The Social Basis of Health & Healing in Africa*, Berkely: University of California, 1992, p. 108.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

²⁵² Shula Marks, Neil Andersson, “Industrialization, Rural Health, and the 1944 National Health Services Commission in South Africa”, in: Steven Feierman, John M. Janzen, eds., *The Social Basis of Health & Healing in Africa*, Berkely: University of California, 1992, p. 144.

little variety. One indicator for this is the frequent occurrence of scurvy, usually known among sailors, who go without a fresh supply of vitamins for months. Moreover, many workers' desire to save or send as much money home as possible caused them to cut costs at the wrong end, for they needed good food simply to survive the ordeal. Correct figures are hard to come by. Most mortality cases did not show up in the mine records because the alleged majority of workers left to die at home. In one case, 50-60% of those who had returned home died within two years of repatriation.²⁵³ In 1905, 118 out of 1000 Malawians working on the Rand had died within the first twelve months of their stay, most of them from 'respiratory disease.'²⁵⁴

Accidents were the order of the day. The Kimberley mine in South Africa, where many Malawians worked, has been described as probably the unhealthiest place on earth during the period under survey. In the 1880s, the total workforce of the mine had an annual accident rate of 1% and the town had an annual death rate of 10% among the black population!²⁵⁵

Colonial medicine was first and foremost working to preserve the health of the European population in the country.²⁵⁶ The core of preemptive measures was to keep both population segments separated, for, "*The native is the reservoir of infective tropical disease, from which the European and his family is subject to invasion.*"²⁵⁷ Beginning with the *Native Vaccination Ordinance* in 1908, there was a 'smallpox police' roaming the country, trying to enforce vaccination policies in the villages.

²⁵³ Randall M. Packard, "Industrialization, Rural Poverty, and Tuberculosis in South Africa, 1850 – 1950", in: Steven Feierman, John M. Janzen, eds., *The Social Basis of Health & Healing in Africa*, Berkely: University of California, 1992, pp. 109f.

²⁵⁴ Shula Marks, Neil Andersson, "Industrialization, Rural Health, and the 1944 National Health Services Commission in South Africa", in: Steven Feierman, John M. Janzen, eds., *The Social Basis of Health & Healing in Africa*, Berkely: University of California, 1992, p. 134.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

²⁵⁶ John Lwanda, "Scotland, Malawi and Medicine: Livingstone's Legacy, I presume? An Historical Perspective", Robert Carachi, ed., *Scottish Medical Journal*, Glasgow: Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, vol. 52, no. 3, 2007, pp. 35 -43.

²⁵⁷ The Director of Medical Services, Southern Rhodesia, "Report on the Public Health for 1930," Salisbury, 1931, p. 19.

They did not have an easy job and the officers themselves questioned their task during the 1919 epidemic. Cases were not reported and people escaped to the hinterland when the smallpox police approached. Apart from vaccination campaigns and a campaign to prevent sleeping sickness, the major, rural part of Malawi's population was only reached by government medical facilities in the 1950s and 60s.²⁵⁸ Before that, two stages can be observed: Around 1890, people living near hospitals began to benefit and later, in the early 1920s, African government officials found treatment, too.²⁵⁹ There was a mental hospital in Zomba, in which British doctors tried to cure Africans from insanity. In quantity, it was a drop in the ocean given the social upheaval of the times. In quality, the system shot itself in the foot. Vaughan states that the colonial medical officers' ethnic classifications played a greater role than the psychiatric ones.²⁶⁰

From a Malawian perspective, biomedical medicine with all its technicalities, institutions and personnel went hand in hand with colonialism. Both subjected Africans, took them out of their social network and removed control from the individual. Mentally, Malawians were both "constructed" as patients and as subjects of his Majesty.²⁶¹ The assigned role as patient bore similar psychological consequences as other roles, into which people were pressed during that time, e.g. soldiers.

e. Mission Medicine

Within the context of missions, western medicine struck better chords with the local population. In fact, the Malawians' initial encounters with

²⁵⁸ Colin A. Baker, "The Government Medical Service in Malawi: An Administrative History, 1891 – 1974" , *Medical History*, 1975, vol. 13, pp. 296 - 311.
<http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/pagerender.fcgi?artid=1081783&pageindex=1>.
 14.4.2009. Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness*, Stanford: University Press, 1991, p. 56.

²⁵⁹ Colin A. Baker, "The Government Medical Service in Malawi: An Administrative History, 1891 – 1974" , *Medical History*, 1975, vol. 13, pp. 296 - 311.
<http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/pagerender.fcgi?artid=1081783&pageindex=1>.
 14.4.2009.

²⁶⁰ Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness*, Stanford: University Press, 1991, p. 202.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 8.

biomedicine happened in connection with the first generation of Reformed missionaries to the country. Already in the 1840s, the Scots had published pamphlets propagating the use of medicine as a handmaid to the Gospel. Prominent missionaries to Malawi were medical doctors, starting with Dr. David Livingstone, followed by Robert Laws, Walter Elmslie and others. Of all, Livingstone was most inclined to acknowledge the wisdom and skills of African healers.²⁶² In general, however, missionary doctors tried to demonstrate the superiority of Western medicine to the medical traditions of other religions, including those who worked with the DRC among the Central Ngoni and Chewa. They were pious about this; seeing their profession as a continuation of Christ's healing ministry in the New Testament. As such, their care was never just about the ulcer or an infected eye. They tried to be moral examples, too, and of course sought to draw their patients into the Christian community. The beginning among Mbelwa's Ngoni in the north did not promise much. If the people finally came and subjected themselves to treatment, only few of them showed gratitude and even less an interest in spiritual matters. Some Ngoni regarded biomedicine as "*charms just as their own*."²⁶³ After these initial hiccups, success came in the range of small surgical operations and medications. As the years went by, the Livingstonia Synod established an exemplary health care among the Tumbuka and the Ngoni.²⁶⁴

Yet two voids were left unfilled, which contributed directly to the rise of Zionism in the country. First, the missionaries lacked an understanding of the spirit dimension and second, the Ngoni in the central kingdom received far less medical care than their cousins in the north. Reports of witchcraft attacks were mostly denied by the whites; occasionally they were explained away or sneered at. With this, the missionaries banned themselves from access to understand and treat the social disruptions

²⁶² Markku Hokkanen, "Scottish Missionaries and African Healers: Perceptions and Relations in the Livingstonia Mission, 1875-1930", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 34, no. 3, Leiden: Brill, 2004, p. 322.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ Hamish McIntosh, *Robert Laws: Servant of Africa*, London: Continuum, 1993.

behind any witchcraft accusation.²⁶⁵ Later, they created a vacuum by disallowing any member of their churches to seek the help of a local healer. ‘Spirit doctors’ were even more vilified.²⁶⁶ The Ngoni might anyhow not have opted to knock on missionaries’ doors in regard to their spirit-induced infirmities. They believed that “*coming too near to God*” was a major cause of insanity, something which did not endear them to seek the help of the missionary-doctor-preacher.²⁶⁷ Exorcism has been known in the RCC, but in missions, they rather resorted to a theology of suffering.²⁶⁸ The DRC and Livingstonia Synod had no antidote against demonic manifestations. This uncompromising either-or stand of the missionaries meant for Africans not just to choose their faith, but their medical care, too. For many, it was too big a package.

Discussing the 1930s, one and a half generations after the arrival of mission medicine among the northern Ngoni, Hokkanen concludes that the missionary doctors and their medical system had won “*legal supremacy*” of medical practice.²⁶⁹ Whoever had the upper hand in the north is not the subject of this study, but the comparison makes clear that the Ngoni in central Malawi neither had a commanding spirit-healing cult like *vimbuza*, nor were the churches and their medical heralds advanced enough to offer sufficient biomedical care to the population. A look at map 1 in chapter 2 indicates that the main mission centers were run by Industrial Missions, which did not emphasize medical care. Other centers such as Mlanda and Gowa mission stressed education with no provision for physical ailments. Whereas medical doctors formed the vanguard of

²⁶⁵ Silas S. Ncozana, *Spirit Possession and Tumbuka Christians, 1875-1950*, PhD, Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen, 1985, p. 102.

²⁶⁶ Markku Hokkanen, “Scottish Missionaries and African Healers: Perceptions and Relations in the Livingstonia Mission, 1875-1930”, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 34, no. 3, Leiden: Brill, 2004, p. 328.

²⁶⁷ Axel-Ivar Berglund, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989, p. 353.

²⁶⁸ John Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, Nairobi: Daughters of St. Paul, 1998, pp. 472ff.

²⁶⁹ Markku Hokkanen, “Scottish Missionaries and African Healers: Perceptions and Relations in the Livingstonia Mission, 1875-1930”, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 34, no. 3, Leiden: Brill, 2004, p. 341.

Livingstonia in the north, the Nkhoma synod had to wait until the second generation for its first physician to come to Malawi.²⁷⁰ Its exemplary hospital at Nkhoma was too far from the future Zion heartland.²⁷¹ This was the medical milieu that Zionism was introduced to in the 1920s. The situation remained largely unchanged until, in the 1950s, wider parts of the population were given access to biomedical care. By that time, however, Zionism and its healing practice had gained ‘supremacy’ in the Ntcheu district.

There is no question that the medical concern and care, which the ‘mainline’ churches provided, made a lasting impression on the general population. Future Zionists observed that physical wellbeing is part of the Christian commission, too. This care, however, was performed by highly trained missionary doctors; Malawians could not aspire to more than helpers. It would take two more generations until an African could become a medical doctor. (Dr. Daniel Malekebu was trained in the USA with the help of Afro-American missionaries. He was allowed to come back to Malawi in 1926.²⁷² African doctors were only employed by the government after 1953.²⁷³) More attainable was faith healing, as described in the New Testament. Reformed theology, however, had cut this supernatural element from their theology; neither did the RCC at that time envision any prayers over the sick except the sacrament of the ‘last unction.’ Like in the USA, Malawi was waiting for a form of Christianity, which would allow healing prayers and the laying on of hands.

²⁷⁰ M. W. Retief, *William Murray of Nyasaland*, Alice: Lovedale Press, 1958.

²⁷¹ <http://www.pcusa.org/health/international/profiles/nkhoma.htm>. 14.4.2009.

²⁷² Patrick Makondesa, *The Church History of Providence Industrial Mission*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2006, p. 168.

²⁷³ John Lwanda, “Scotland, Malawi and Medicine: Livingstone’s Legacy, I presume? An Historical Perspective”, Robert Carachi, ed., *Scottish Medical Journal*, Glasgow: Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, vol. 52, no. 3, 2007, p. 38.

f. Characteristics and Demarcations of Zion's Health System

“...the people had difficulty understanding preachers who didn't heal
and healers who didn't preach.”²⁷⁴

The background of traditional and early biomedicine in the country will now allow us to analyze Zion's health system further. Why were they so successful? Where was the Zionists' approach novel to the people of Malawi? Where did they continue and develop existing concepts and practices? What have they discarded, and for what reasons?

Zion's health system was, in the 1920s, a novel way of receiving and brokering health to the people of Malawi. This form of medical approach was not offered by any other church, yet Zionism is not a healing cult but a Christian church with emphasis on faith healing. Parallels with traditional healing practices do exist; however, its foundation marked a pronounced difference to the local cults of affliction. For the South African context, and this applies also to Malawi, Flint has shown that similar traditional healing practices now took place by the power of the Holy Spirit, in contrast to the former ancestor-based healing.²⁷⁵ Wide parts of the population were under no illusion as to how far their ancestral cults had protected them from military and economic invasion. People were ready to try something new, but most were not willing to blueprint western religion, less so with a western expression of worship. Zion, on the other hand, proved flexible enough to assimilate African elements like drumming into what was held as a rediscovered Biblical truth, physical healing. Moreover, Zion's health system was black, it could be owned by the people, at a time when they were dispossessed of all else. Spiritual healing served as a “*cultural shield against a too-rapid accommodation of European religious and secular culture.*”²⁷⁶ In its

²⁷⁴ Charles Kraft, *Christian Life Magazin*, Wheaton, vol. 10, 1982, p. 65.

²⁷⁵ Karen E. Flint, *Healing Traditions: African Medicine, Cultural Exchange, & Competition in South Africa, 1820-1948*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009.

²⁷⁶ Charles M. Good, *The Steamer Parish: The Rise and Fall of Missionary Medicine on an African Frontier*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004, p. 23.

entirety, health care in Zionism is more than the sum of its component ingredients. It was, when it came, something new.²⁷⁷

Yet it bore the reference of a far away founder, a white healer with a “Dr.” to his name, John Alexander. This tension between local heritage and the admiration for an unknown founder across the ocean should not strike as too ambivalent, for healing cults in the region have always thrived on transnationalism. Any infringement on health is seen as a foreign invasion (into the body and community). What better than a diviner who has travelled into far-off lands to learn about foreignness? Traditional diviners have been main carriers for cultural exchange and innovation in Africa.²⁷⁸

There is a widespread belief among Bantu-speaking peoples of southern and southeastern Africa that healers from outside the community can be more powerful than local healers.²⁷⁹ Intrusions of foreigners, the *amandiki*, who had divination and prophesying abilities, were known among the Nguni, too.²⁸⁰ For Malawi alone, healers gather their reputation and medicines in Tanzania, South Africa and in places as far away as the Congo. Malawian healers, on the other hand, are known and respected in Botswana and find their clientel in Cape Town, too. Neo-pentecostal churches are taken up in these transnational streams, thus drawing them more into the Christian arena.²⁸¹ The result is a more ‘spiritualized’ version of transnational healing brokerage with less material ‘fetishes’ and medicines.

²⁷⁷ Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 158.

²⁷⁸ Evans M. Zuesse, *Ritual Cosmos. The Sanctification of Life in African Religions*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985, p. 215.

²⁷⁹ Harry G. West, Tracy J. Luedke, eds., *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006. Steven M. Friedson, *Dancing Prophets*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 191.

²⁸⁰ Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 34.

²⁸¹ Rijk van Dijk, “Transnational Images of Pentecostal Healing: Comparative Examples from Malawi and Botswana”, in: Harry G. West, Tracy J. Luedke, eds., *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, pp. 101ff.

However, Dowie remained only a distant reference. In Malawi, the *machona* were transnational enough to be regarded as men with authority, having learned therapeutic practices and bringing with them a power not available to those who had stayed within the confines of their localit.²⁸² Transnational substantiation refers to matter, too. As mentioned, Zulu lore ascribed special spiritual status to water fetched from the Indian Ocean. In Malawi, the custom is similar with Lake Malawi water used in the ZCC (8) during exorcism. Moreover, they subscribe to all products from their church in South Africa, not just for economic, but for spiritual reasons as well. Transnationalism is an international phenomenon.²⁸³ Similar forces are in power among Evangelicals and Pentecostals, too. I could cite European Baptists who want to be baptized in the River Jordan in Israel or the custom of prayer cloths, still in use among the Pentecostals, especially in the USA.

While the *machona* provided wings to the Zionists, the institution of healing rooms gave them roots. Having a healer at close quarters was a conceptual continuum from traditional healing shrines, yet the custom to treat patients with prolonged prayers and to keep them intramural had come to Malawi through its American root. Pentecostals like everything instantaneously; Zionists have more patience, especially when it comes to faith healing. According to Bishop Makoko (15), intercession for healing can continue for weeks, until the answer comes.²⁸⁴ (Charismatics have a term for this, they call it 'soaking prayer.') For example Amos Chibani of the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3) became sick and completely paralyzed in August 1987. He was brought to the church headquarters in Whwayo and was being continuously prayed over and nursed for three weeks. Then the healing happened and he went home. The leaders of the church reported many similar examples. It is therefore, in most cases, not one single prayer which heals, but an exposure to the system that effects healing. By calling their healing rooms "*chipatala*," (hospital), as for

²⁸² Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, London: Routledge, 2002, p. 118.

²⁸³ Andre Corton, Ruth Marshall-Fratani, eds., *Between Babel and Pentecost*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.

²⁸⁴ Int. Bishop P. E. Makoko, Kaluzi, 28.2.2006.

example the ZCC (8) does in Ndirande, Blantyre, the Zionists express proud possession of their own health system. At Kamphate, Ntcheu, the Zion ya Bata (2) has a special healing room inside the church. Their *chipatala* is ritually kept pure as it is solely used for healing prayers.²⁸⁵ The CCACZ at Joseph village, Chimutu, Lilongwe, still has no church building. *Mlevi* Newa has therefore reserved one room in his house for healing purposes. Patients are admitted; sometimes they stay for many weeks.²⁸⁶ The *chipatala* is not just a prayer clinic. Zion's sisters actually nurse the sick, provide for food, do the laundry and counsel female occupants. The advantages of stationary treatment are at hand. Patients can build a much stronger relationship to the church, especially its leaders. They can be better monitored, their diet is controlled and oftentimes they are given a break from labour and domestic demands at home. Many *machona* were nursed back to strength after their stint abroad. It truly is a retreat: freedom from work, vacation from strained relationships, a break from maternal and conjugal duties. Instead constant care and continued devotions are aimed at the patients. Not surprisingly, such a change of venue produces betterment in most cases. It is a win win situation, since healers and church leaders build a community of dependents around them, which means empowerment in this culture. Eventual discharge is celebrated as a healing; it adds to the healer's reputation and the convalescent's gratitude cements loyalty to the church. This kind of care was something new, yet forged from traditional custom and western practices. With it, Zionists had an edge over traditional and biomedical care, at least during their first generation in the country. How well the system of local healing homes works can be seen in Nigeria. T. A. Lambo is a psychiatrist, trained in the biomedical school. He has, however, established 'villages' inside mental asylums,

²⁸⁵ Int. Bishop Moffat P. Lichapa, Zion ya Bata (2), Ntcheu, 14.10.2007.

²⁸⁶ Int. *Mlevi* Frackson N.J. Newa and other leaders of the CCACZ, Joseph village, Chimutu, 14.5.2008.

which provide services and mental assistance similar to Zion's healing homes – with great success.²⁸⁷

Luedke describes the difference between healing prophets in the Angónia and Macanga Provinces of Mozambique. In the former, the prophets are active in 'hospitals,' spiritual clinics, while in the latter, the prophets are exercising their duties in churches.²⁸⁸ In Malawi, all prayer rooms of the Zionists are part of a local church. This underlines my position that Zionism is not a religious healing cult, but a church with emphasis on healing.

Over and against biomedicine, Zionism offered a spiritual approach.²⁸⁹ Western doctors had believed for a long time that the causes for ailment lie exclusively on the pathophysiological level. This is, even by their own standards, not the whole story any longer. For example, studies confirm that *stress* causes coronary defects and a host of other related illnesses²⁹⁰ or that migration to urban centers is directly linked to high blood pressure levels.²⁹¹ Spiritual afflictions cannot be healed with material medicine; that much is clear to the Zionists. Their rejection of western medicine is therefore not only based on grounds of competing medical systems or fears of pollution – it simply does not make sense to them to cure a demon with a pill. To generalize it even more in the cultural understanding of sickness, in Malawi, "*We are not dealing with sickness but with misfortune and the prevention of misfortune.*"²⁹²

Zion's prayer warriors locked horns with whatever spirit stood in their way. Unlike some traditional healers, prophets do not make use of any spirit in the patient. They reject and try to expel them. There were no

²⁸⁷ T. Adeoye Lambo, "The Concept and Practice of Mental Health in African Cultures", *East African Medical Journal*, vol. 37, 1960, pp. 464-471.

²⁸⁸ Tracy J. Luedke, "Presidents, Bishops and Mothers", in: Harry G. West, Tracy J. Luedke, eds., *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 51.

²⁸⁹ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, London: Heinemann, 1969, p. 91.

²⁹⁰ Meredith B. McGuire, *Ritual Healing in Suburban America*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991, pp. 204-206.

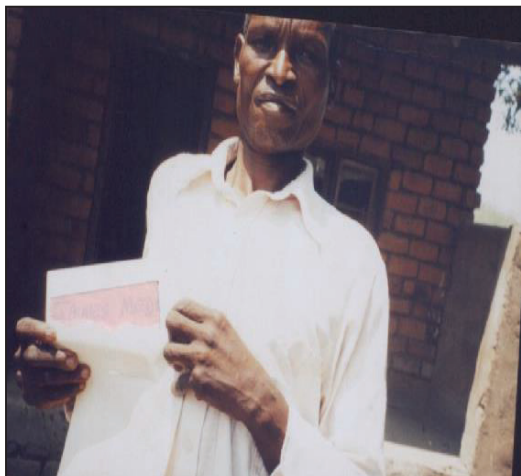
²⁹¹ Robert Hackenberg et al, "Migration, Modernization and Hypertension: Blood Pressure Levels in Four Philippine Communities", *Medical Anthropology*, 7, 1983, pp. 45-71.

²⁹² Peter Worsley as quoted in Linda E. Thomas, *Under the Canopy*, Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1999, p. 108.

philosophical and metaphysical explanations or evasions, as could be heard from Reformed pulpits and missionaries, who refused to pray over people tormented by fear of witchcraft. Zion's concept was power, not analysis. Their universe was, in contrast to the traditional African worldview, a simple dualism between good and evil, sickness and health, blessing and curse, God and the devil. Even with such an indiscriminatory pneumatology, Zionists struck the right chord with the population. So, in the absence of any dominant traditional spirit cult, Zionism became the first address to all ridden with spirit-inflicted diseases in the Ntcheu District. I will soon explain why Zionism is not a cult of spirit affliction like *vimbuza*. It cannot be denied, however, that they served a similar clientel.

Zion's medical system is holistic. It incorporates social healing, moral integrity and the spiritual dimension. Certain physiological treatments have their place, for example the described 'water therapy' in the ZCC (8), not to mention diets and a weekly workout when dancing. Zion's prophets do not cause social disruptions by their diagnosis, as is the case with the *sing'anga*, who oftentimes finds a scapegoat for his patient's malaise by pointing fingers at someone in the social surrounding. Instead of healing, witchcraft accusations further upset the community. To mind come several interviews, which we held with the Zionists over the subject. They all felt relieved of those aggravating accusations, which are part and parcel of traditional healing. This is yet another aspect where Christian and traditional healing differ. Zionists believe that Jesus Christ died a vicarious death on the cross, making Him the ultimate 'scapegoat.' It is this core Christian belief, which serves to take the tensions out of their relationships. Biomedicine, on the other hand, has left the *self* almost completely out of the picture and reduced the patient to his sickness. I worked in German hospitals for four years as a nurse. I noticed how patients were referred to not by their name, but by their sickness, "*The appendix in room 8 wants more water to drink.*" A healing approach, which leaves the self and the social dimension out of the picture, can never be sufficient, especially in Africa.

In Zion, personal causation is stressed and, to name it, sin. This moral thrust in the sickness' interpretation establishes an interface between the patient and the world.²⁹³ As a solution, it seeks to anchor the patient deeper in his relationship to God, his family and the church. The supplicant himself is called to change and recommit. Families undergo a regular check-up at Zion's gates. Anti-social behaviour like gambling with the household's sparse income is nipped in the bud, so are signs of filial disobedience.



James Medi suffered from mental illness in 2008. He had been a member of the CCAP, but the church, according to his testimony, could not help him. He spent some time in the mental ward at Zomba Central Hospital, to no avail. Healing prayers by the CCACZ finally brought Medi back to his senses. He stems from Mwachunga village, Mkagula, Zomba. He was baptized in October 2009 at Namadingo, Zomba.

As described, the members' acts of confession and reconciliation have to take place before physical healing can come to pass. Mary Douglas' observation could not be exemplified better: the physical body is the symbol of the social body.²⁹⁴

This holistic aspect reflects culture. It speaks of African holism and wholesomeness. Most civilisations on this continent, cast in ever-diverse cultures, refuse to compartmentalize the human being. Colonial medicine, biomedicine in general, lacks this wider frame of contextual healing. If medicine cannot be all physical, religion cannot exclusively be spiritual. People want their gods to deliver. It is written about the Lele in the DRC:

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

²⁹⁴ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, London: Routledge, 2002, p. 142.

These people are much more concerned with what their religion can deliver in the way of fertility, cures and hunting success than in perfecting man and achieving religious union in the fullest sense.²⁹⁵

An interesting testimony comes from Bishop Makoko of the New Zion Church (15). He did not have the privilege to go to school. Born in 1934, his parents had not belonged to any of those churches that ran mission schools in the Ntcheu district at that time. Yet, the Holy Spirit gave him the ability to read and write. This happened instantly and is a real wonder in his eyes.²⁹⁶ The bishop's story could easily be grouped among testimonies of healing miracles. Other healing miracles, which belong into this category, are believers' bumper harvests during draughts, longevity of shoes or clothes and employment provisions.

Therefore, Zionism offers healing which is the restoration of the missing aspects in man's life. "*Healing was the appropriate response to virtually every problem.*"²⁹⁷ The ideal is to achieve the Biblical *shalom*: peace, health, prosperity. The *machona* experience reduced man to a working machine, uprooted from home and hearth. The Zionist preachers who heralded their message in the mine compounds offered a way to achieve completeness. Back in Malawi, the *machona* pioneers found a world torn by poverty, sickness, strife, oppression, war and hopelessness. Everybody was wanting something.²⁹⁸ Their Gospel, however, was able to address most of those needs as it targeted the whole man. It worked, in more than just the one way of physical healing. It is personal empowerment on a holistic scale. "*Healing means to 'remake' this world,*

²⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 212.

²⁹⁶ Int. Bishop P.E. Makoko, Kaluzi, 28.2.2006.

²⁹⁷ Meredith B. McGuire, *Ritual Healing in Suburban America*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991, p. 186.

²⁹⁸ "*The key to Malawi's history is poverty.*" Landeg White, *Magomero*, Cambridge: University Press, 1987, p. xii.

after misfortune, violence and war have unmade it."²⁹⁹ Here was a church then, which lifted the central tenet of the Christian faith, salvation, from the realm of the abstract into the reality of people's lives.³⁰⁰

The holistic approach implies that Zion's health care is systemic, too. The system had been surprisingly coherent, until biomedicine arose as a real and sometimes better alternative. Chronologically, biomedicine became the alternative school of medicine in Malawi. Traditional healing and even the Zionists had arrived earlier in most locations in the Ntcheu district. Biomedicine was the real spanner in the works, as it broke up the system's integrity and created a medical pluralism in Malawi.

Inside Zion's health system are, however, still many elements in tension with each other, but they have understood to reconcile them, thus keeping the system intact. The system has cybernetic features, which keep the powers in balance. The prophet and the *mlevi*, for example, serve as antagonists. The prophets function to stir the church. They can be challenging, even rude. Their diagnoses oftentimes come as a shock to the Zionist believer. But they do not have the final say. Whereas the prophet provides ecstasy, the *mlevi* creates structure. It happens in the Zion Church (30) that a prophet gives a wrong diagnosis.³⁰¹ This will call for the *alevi* and the case is investigated. It can even lead to disciplinary action against the prophet. Believers told me that they trust the *mlevi* more than the prophet. In some churches, the *mlevi* stands already close by while the prophets diagnose over patients. Another tension is the riddle of theodicy. Without exception, Zion's preachers claim that the Lord wants to heal from any sickness. Being miserable is not a given in their theology. If healing does not happen, a crisis should follow. In such case, an explanation is not given but adjourned. For the systemic approach offers the believer and healer multiple therapies, ample amount

²⁹⁹ Steven Feierman, "Ethnographic Regions – Healing, Power and History", in: Harry G. West, Tracy J. Luedke, eds., *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 190.

³⁰⁰ Francis MacNutt, *Healing*, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1983, p. 39.

³⁰¹ Int. Thomas Mlangeni, National General Secretary, Zion Church (30), Ndirande, 12.8.2007.

of time and interpretations to fall back to. It has to be borne in mind though, that healing is a mystical affair as the believers enter the spiritual field. The history of religion shows how mysticism invites suffering from either end in the form of sadism and masochism.³⁰² Zionists *pay* for their healing, especially if it is prolonged, by enduring pain - versus faith. In fact, such endurance and self-surrender is valued by the leaders as it serves as a real test of a neophyte's faith.³⁰³

What attracts people to medical schools and to 'alternative' medicine is in many cases not a single therapeutic approach, but a larger system of beliefs, of which healing is only one part.³⁰⁴ Providing meaning is one of the big advantages which Zion's system has over biomedicine. Not only are the symptoms treated, the prophets try to get to the cause of any sickness. An individual supplicant will experience that Zionists are able to apply order to an otherwise chaotic situation, in which sickness has imbalanced all other aspects of life.

Transition periods and entailing crises are part of any system as its protagonists change guard. Zion's medical specialists are reared in their midst. Even those members who are not office bearers will, to a certain degree, intercede for others and experience healing. The offices of healer and prophet are potentially available to any believer, in contrast to traditional diviners and biomedical practitioners in the country. Moreover, this is one temple court where women still have access; most other areas in the church are the men's prerogative. Raising such officers within the system works; in addition, the *machona* input served to introduce etic elements. Vibrant transnational connections help to develop the system further in Malawi. This can be clearly observed in the ZCC (8). Vulnerability in the healing rite goes both ways. Patients want to know if the doctor is ritually clean, too. If not, danger could ensue. (Their requirement for prophets and healers to abstain from sexual activity prior to the service will further be analysed in chapters 5 and 6.) Here is suffices

³⁰² Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, New York: Random House, 1990, p. 64.

³⁰³ Int. Pastor Ereck Dauya, AFM, Ndirande, 26.5.2010.

³⁰⁴ Meredith B. McGuire, *Ritual Healing in Suburban America*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991, p. 5.

to say that the Zionists have an advantage by raising their healers within the system. They know each other and this reduces the risk of ritual contamination. Compare this with, e.g. a western doctor trying invasive therapies among the Malawians. When it comes to healing, Zionists are Donatists. (A group appearing during the Latin Church period in northern Africa, whose adherents held to the notion that sacraments must be administered by ritually clean priests.)

McGuire observes that healing cults, which tap into immanent soul powers (e.g. psychic groups and Eastern meditation techniques), hardly employ objects, while those groups that have an image of an external healing power (e.g. Christian faith-healers praying to God) prefer objects to symbolically channel power to its destination.³⁰⁵ Zion's entire arsenal of healing means is indeed very varied and multilayered. One has to consider that they are part and parcel of a wider healing system, which in turn rests on an underlying healing theology. Nobody interviewed ascribed inherent powers to staffs or strings. Theirs is not some kind of mumble-jumble belief in tricks. However, the Zionists agreed that these means help to raise everyone's awareness; they make the spiritual approach more palpable. Much of what their musical approach in healing entails will still be discussed in the last section of this chapter, the Zionists' state of mind during healing.



Healing prayers at the CCACZ Namadingo, Zomba, 10th October 2009. The boy has a deep wound in his toe. The healer, Thomson Lisimba, has received a revelation that the wound is caused by magical powers. He advises the boy to wash the wound with blessed water. Lisimba also saw in a vision how a brush from heaven came down, cleaning the wound, meaning that God will certainly heal this injury.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

Nevertheless, following traditional healing practice and vindicated by their interpretation of the Bible, Zion's drums made sense to the people. Over colonial and biomedical approaches, they took into consideration the musical and spiritual dimension of the African universe. Dancing and drumming, to them, is praying.³⁰⁶ The agency of music lifts the prophet to a higher plain, a spiritual awareness and alertness, where he is less obstructed to receive revelations.

The patient, on the other hand, is challenged to change focus, away from himself and the sickness that afflicts him, to an exterior benevolent power. Moreover, the unspoken invitation to come and join the dance implies a break with the patient's passivity, challenging the seeker to take matters more into his own hands.

As much as the Zionists ascribe the healing to God, it is yet an act which they want to solemnize. They do not execute it; at any rate they stage it. For healing to work, it has to enter their consciousness; music and dance rituals are the prime means for this.³⁰⁷ In his remarkable book, *Musicophilia*, Oliver Sacks has gathered an astounding array of music-related accounts, which he analyzes in his capacity as a neurologist. I have gleaned two things from his record, which are of importance in relation to Zionist singers and dancers: first, music can heal people, both mentally and motorically. It thus forms the core of several therapeutic approaches.³⁰⁸ Secondly, Sacks mentions a convincing number of cases, wherein music led to strong mental reactions, with a wide scale of physical expressions accompanying them.³⁰⁹

Apart from the effect on the individual supplicant, Zion's dancing and drumming is communal music therapy. Music can serve as a physical de-inhibitor on the individual and break the ice between individuals in different social settings.³¹⁰ Their formations and rhythms demand

³⁰⁶ Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 66.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

³⁰⁸ Oliver Sacks, *Musicophilia*, London: Picador, 2007, pp. 214ff.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 25ff.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 235, 297.

harmonization, falling in line, leadership and subordination. People who regularly dance with each other in circles are certainly less prone to strife and conflicts.

In contrast to the *sing'anga* and certain biomedical treatment and medications, Zion's treatments are financially affordable. Healing is free of charge in all churches. Some testimonies are on record of Zionists, who had formerly gone to traditional healers. Those had set members of families up against one another amidst witchcraft accusations. The supplicants lost a lot of money in the process. In some cases, the wider family, who provided everything out of fear and despair, was driven into financial ruin. The fear is born out of the *sing'anga's* claim that healing can only be effected by prompt and punctual payments for his services.³¹¹ If not, early relapse and even fatal consequences could follow.³¹²

Proper and instant biomedical care is still today the privilege of few in Malawi. In theory, treatment is free in government hospitals. However, clinics are sparse in the country. Hospitals are crowded; one can see mattresses under beds, patients sleeping on the floors and in the corridors. Drugs are often not available or too expensive. Forty percent of Ministry of Health positions are vacant throughout the country; another statistic from 2006 indicates one physician per 100,000 people. The situation is exacerbated by high mortality due to HIV/AIDS; about 14% of the adult population is known to be infected. This human resource crisis has created a lack of capacity to deliver health services, especially in rural areas, where primary health care is severely compromised.³¹³ Residents in rural areas needing emergency care will most likely not make it to a hospital in time. Over the last years private clinics and hospitals have sprung up in the major cities. Their consultation fee alone exceeds the monthly income of the average farmer. It is then no wonder that still today, Zionism offers a viable and affordable health system to the rural poor.

³¹¹ Gerhard Seibert, "But the Manifestation", in: E. Morier-Genoud, D. Péclard, eds., *Le Fait Missionnaire*, Lausanne: UNIL, vol. 17, 2005, p. 144.

³¹² Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, London: Routledge, 2002, p. 109.

³¹³ http://www.who.int/hac/crises/mwi/background/Malawi_June06.pdf. 13.2.2009.

There is a catch, though. The Zionists' health system had been absolute in that it prohibited members to seek help from any other medical system and it is exclusive because, in most cases, only church members are prayed over.

Health in Zion is based on faith. Seeking help outside the medical means provided is simultaneously a statement of disbelief, especially since other medical systems were thought to work through spirits and assumptions, too. Zionists and the early Pentecostals refused western medicine on the same grounds as they refused their traditional quackery: to them it was all magic. Ingrained animism made any distinction impossible. *"African 'medicine' is, in the main, a magical concoction, and there can be no doubt that Bantu think of European drugs as acting in the same way."*³¹⁴ Biomedical treatment would defile the believer. Stepping outside of Zion's health system was tantamount to forsaking salvation. Therefore, all denominations of the first generation did not allow their members outside help.

How the times have changed! At the time of this research, the picture has been altered significantly. All 30 denominations in the country offer faith-healing, but only ten have kept their absolutist claim. Younger denominations, all since 1951, do not uphold the insular medical claims of the founding fathers. Pragmatism and the increasing possibilities for biomedical treatment in the country have changed the paradigm. One might argue that the Bible, containing appeals for mercy in the face of suffering, was instrumental in this, too. The weakest points of the old school were cases of children suffering, accidents or leaders giving in to the temptation first. The Zion Church (30) was founded because of disputes whether to cooperate with missionaries or not. Interestingly, when they broke away from the CCACZ in 2004, the leaders immediately allowed their old/new members to go for biomedical treatment, too. Yet one can feel that the permission hurts their bold faith statements; compromises are made to reconcile the old claims with the newly found liberty. In the same church (30), if it helps, it is still God working through

³¹⁴ William C. Willoughby, *The Soul of the Bantu*, Westport: Negro Universities Press, 1970, p. 97.

biomedical treatments.³¹⁵ During the funeral procession for a late Zionist from Mbayani, Blantyre, a car crashed into the group of mourners at Chirimba bridge. Many people were seriously injured; one woman died on the spot. The casualties were taken to Queen Elisabeth Central Hospital. Other Zionists rushed to the hospital and prayed over those admitted. Many injured people were then, according to Mlangeni, miraculously healed in the wards. This testimony is an interesting blend of vital first aid care and faith-claims. It serves to underline that even in the new dispensation, the scientific means will fail without God. A Zion church in Chimoio, Mozambique, who had in early days demonized biomedical and hospital treatments, nowadays sends its members to hospital if faith healing has not worked after seven days.³¹⁶ In case of accidents with bad injuries, some of the former hard-liners nowadays allow first aid. “*When someone breaks a leg, physical treatment is needed.*”³¹⁷ Bishop Magagula of the Christian Apostolic Sabbath Church in Zion (13) allows his members to go to hospital, even to a herbalist, but divinations are prohibited.³¹⁸ This can be taken as the average opinion among the 20 denominations: Members are first and foremost encouraged to seek healing within the church’s health system. If this does not help, they are allowed to visit a clinic, hospital or local healer. The line is drawn at any spiritual and spiritualistic treatments, including divination to ascertain the culprit(s).

The ten older churches who still condemn any outside help are the literal die-hards. The Zion ya bata (2) still underlines Dowie’s contempt for “*Doctors, Drugs and the Devil.*” For instance in the 1980s, their Zionist settlement near Salima successfully prevented the setting up of an anti-cholera clinic, after government officials had vaccinated all else in the district. The medics built their tents on the other side of the Salima road, simultaneously Bishop Ng’ombe told his followers that anybody crossing

³¹⁵ Int. Thomas Mlangeni, National General Secretary, Zion Church (30), Ndirande, 12.8.2007.

³¹⁶ Gerhard Seibert, “But the Manifestation”, in: E. Morier-Genoud, D. Péclard, eds., *Le Fait Missionnaire*, Lausanne: UNIL, vol. 17, 2005, pp. 142f.

³¹⁷ Int. Mlevi Thomas T.W. Kayenda, Msangu, 28.7.2007.

³¹⁸ Int. Bishop Pearson Fasinesi Lipenga Magagula, Kunthawira, Chileka, 4.3.2004.

the road to undergo vaccination need not return to the village. This had such a strong effect that the government officials had no one to treat. They could do nothing but pack up, amongst jubilations from the other side of the road. Another example of how firm Zion ya bata (2) still stands against medical treatment is their admission for baptism. Other Zionists can just join them without the need for rebaptism. However, if they come from a Zionist church which allows the use of traditional African medicine or visits to hospitals, then those newcomers need to be re-baptized.

In its last consequence, trusting entirely in God for all medical needs is indeed *the* step of faith. The entailing risks are understood, not only by the Zionists, but also by outsiders:

When I got married, I told my mother-in-law, 'I am taking your daughter into the Zion ya bata church. In that church, we don't go to the hospital for treatment, we just believe in the living God alone for healing.' Then my wife's mother frankly told me, 'It is not possible for you to take my daughter into the Zion church, for she is the only daughter.'³¹⁹

Exclusivism means that healing and health can only be received and sustained inside the church, *extra ecclesiam nulla sanitas*, so to say. They only pray over their kind.³²⁰ This is official policy in most denominations; the ten churches mentioned earlier enforce it more strongly. Baptism and official church membership is thus the way to become entitled to healing prayers. Seen from their side, healing has become a decoy to evangelize; all healing procedures serve to draw the patient into the church's community. Seen from the perspective of potential help-seekers, they will think twice before becoming a member. Zionists are often the last resort that sick people go to.³²¹ Prayers from Pentecostal ministers are always for free, going to hospital might be the longest journey, visiting the

³¹⁹ Joseph Jimu, sermon, Zion ya Bata (2), Chidothe, Mlumbe, Zomba, 16.7.2006.

³²⁰ Gerhard Seibert, "But the Manifestation", in: E. Morier-Genoud, D. Péclard, eds., *Le Fait Missionnaire*, Lausanne: UNIL, vol. 17, 2005, p. 142.

³²¹ Minister Chilowa Banda, ZCC, sermon, Majiga, Ndirande, Blantyre, 9.7.2006.

sing'anga might cost the most, but the preconditions and aftermath of Zion's offer is a stake raised very high.³²² In many cases the sickness or problem will have become chronic and more serious by the time people finally arrive in Zion. Daneel describes the psychological pressure which can build up for someone to join the church out of despair over a sick child:

When my wife asked me whether I wanted the child to die, I got up and left. When the Apostles came they prayed for the child. They rose from their knees and addressed me as follows, "We must baptize you in order to obtain the power of praying for your child." I told them that I had no objection if they started by baptizing my wives, so that I could first stand and watch the procedure and make up my mind. Thereupon they asked me, "Don't you want your child?" I told them, "I want my child!" We quarrelled until they said that they would stop praying for the child. At this stage I consented. So I took my whole family...with me to the Jordan. We were all baptized and then returned to the homestead. There the praying for my son was resumed until he was healed.³²³

This kind of blackmailing is in most cases softened in Malawian Zionism; the official line is not always followed. Even in the CCACZ, some local classes offer prayers for unbelievers, with no strings attached.³²⁴ In the ZCC (8), prayers are offered to all interested, but healing can only be sustained if those healed come to join the church. It is consequently not prepaid delivery, but pay upon delivery:

³²² James Pfeiffer, "Money, Modernity and Morality: Traditional Healing and the Expansion of the Holy Spirit in Mozambique", in: Harry G. West, Tracy J. Luedke, eds., *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 92.

³²³ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol. 2, The Hague: Mouton, 1974, p. 195.

³²⁴ Int. *Mtsogoleri* Levison Chisamba, Yacobe Walasi, Lumbadzi, 28.4.2008.

Preacher: After healing we don't force people, we just ask the patient, 'are you healed?'³²⁵

Patient: Yes, I am healed.

Preacher: We tell him, "then you may go."

Patient: No, I am not going. I am afraid because the sickness may come again to me then where shall I get help, I have decided (to be with) you.

Preacher: Oh, so you want to be with us?

Patient: Eee.

Preacher: Let us now go to the Jordan for baptism...

Apart from evangelizing, the churches know that many diseases (and especially social vices and addictions) require a change of life-style and close monitoring. *"Genuine healing in the Holy Spirit requires conversion, faith, and a moral life..."*³²⁶ For healing to work, one has to be inside the system, has to embrace their theology and underlying worldview.³²⁷ The reverse conclusion does not hold true: if healing brings them into the church, sickness gets them out of it. For one, it is not the healing that qualifies for membership (not everybody gets healed), but the supplicant's submission to the requirement of baptism. Secondly, they are not totally sold out to a *theologia gloriae*, as Kiernan would have us believe. *"...when a Zionist falls ill it is taken to mean that somehow his membership is at risk."*³²⁸ I take this statement as a theoretical construct lacking any touch from real life. If this be true in the literal sense, then as a last consequence, there would not be any funeral among the Zionists.

³²⁵ Minister Chilowa Banda, ZCC, sermon, Majiga, Ndirande, Blantyre, 9.7.2006.

³²⁶ James Pfeiffer, "Money, Modernity and Morality: Traditional Healing and the Expansion of the Holy Spirit in Mozambique", in: Harry G. West, Tracy J. Luedke, eds., *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 96.

³²⁷ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol. 2, The Hague: Mouton, 1974, p. 206.

³²⁸ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990 p. 160.

g. Healing in the Right Mind

“Drumming helps us to prophecy. It gives us power.”³²⁹

In the following paragraphs, I will answer the questions whether Malawi’s Zionists have simply sugared traditional healing cults with a Christian coating and what kind of mental state they are in while dancing and drumming. What are the roots of diagnostic prophesying and where do the traditional diviner and the Zionist prophet differ?

Some observers say it clearly: the Zionists have lost it. They have danced themselves out of the Christian frame. They have gone too far into the traditional camp when drumming; dancing themselves into a “frenzy” during healing.

Becken is perhaps most careful with his analysis. According to him, African thought-structures are given a new content by the AICs.³³⁰ Oosthuizen sees Zion’s prophets as a replacement of the traditional diviner.³³¹ Seibert comes to no different conclusion: “...therefore the prophet’s rituals have been considered an adapted form of African traditional healing.”³³² Lee is adamant in his summary, “So that despite all Christian trappings and symbols involved, what we have here is essentially the old divination cult in a new form.”³³³ In Chirimba, Blantyre, Nindi made this observation among the CCACZ, “The songs provide a good environment for the prophets and prophetesses to fall into ecstasy.”³³⁴

Some terms and techniques need to be clarified before beginning the discussion. What are trance and ecstasy? What is the traditional mindset

³²⁹ Int. Mrs. F. Chaluluka, Rev. R.L. Gama, Rev. L. Mbewe, Rev. P. Makanani, HACZ (3), Whwayo, 6.11.2005.

³³⁰ Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 130.

³³¹ Gerhardus Oosthuizen, *The Healer-Prophet in Afro-Christian Churches*, Leiden: Brill, 1992.

³³² Gerhard Seibert, “But the Manifestation”, in: E. Morier-Genoud, D. Péclard, eds., *Le Fait Missionnaire*, Lausanne: UNIL, vol. 17, 2005, p. 144.

³³³ S.G. Lee, “Spirit Possession among the Zulu”. In: John Beattie, John Middleton, eds., *Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa*, New York: African Publishing, 1969, p. 152.

³³⁴ John Nindi, *Chirimba Christian Apostolic Church in Zion, Its Establishment, Organization and Beliefs*, Zomba: Kachere, 2006, p. 11.

when divining? How does music affect psychological states in cults of affliction?

Trance is, by its simple etymological definition, the mind's drifting into a different state of consciousness.³³⁵ There is no agreement whether this new state of consciousness is total or partial, whether the person is conscious or unconscious in the event. Most anthropologists derive their definitions from the medical and psychological genre. Lewis prefers 'dissociation' over 'trance'; thus, as is the general vein of his work, focusing more on what kind of consciousness (and life) people leave behind when trancing, not to where they are heading.³³⁶ In our traditional Malawian context, Schoffeleers uses the same term, dissociation, which is "*a state of real or feigned psychic dissociation during which the spirits of deceased human beings are thought to act through a living person.*"³³⁷ There are many reasons why people would like to switch to a different mode. Lewis' examples of exploited wives and abused labourers speak of trance as a refuge; social ostracism of trance-like possession states helps to eventually overcome the domestic wrongs that caused it in the first place. Following Rouget, the term trance is characterized by total or at least partial amnesia of what happened.³³⁸ There is a temporary absence of the subject's consciousness, also called 'soul-loss.'³³⁹ Trance would then mean that during such state, the person is no longer in control of himself, has become the pawn of a different power or person. Trance is henceforth used in anthropological literature to describe depersonalization in possession cults. As mentioned, such interpretation can be challenged from all sides, but it gives us at least a definition to work with. Trance happens among the !Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari desert during their cult of affliction. They heal while dancing, after the drumming has heated them up to a considerable state of frenzy. They

³³⁵ <http://dictionary.reference.com>. 18.2.2009.

³³⁶ Ioan M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, London: Penguin Books, 1971.

³³⁷ Matthew Schoffeleers, *Religion and the Dramatisation of Life*, Zomba: Kachere, 1997, p. 102.

³³⁸ Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession*, London: University of Chicago Press, 1985, pp. 8f.

³³⁹ Ioan M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, London: Penguin Books, 1971, p. 29.

lose consciousness, convulse and light their hair with fire, as they believe that the flames will activate the curative powers in the medicine.³⁴⁰

Ecstasy has frequently been given the same meaning as trance; some writers have used the terms interchangeably.³⁴¹ If differentiated, ecstasy is usually defined as something 'lighter' than trance. Rouget sees a sharp distinction between trance and ecstasy (and enstasis).³⁴² Trance is followed by total amnesia, ecstasy is not. The latter is a louder, more joyful experience, whereas trance can be characterized by convulsions, crying, shouting and falling. To reach a state of trance, sensory overstimulation is used, such as noises, touches and agitation. Ecstasy does not use such means to get to a certain state of mind, it is an expression of what already is.

In connection with possession cults, Firth distinguishes between three different kinds of trance: There is spirit possession during which the human passively loses control to a spirit. This is seen as malevolent by outsiders, who often try to exorcise the spirit. In the second case, spirit mediumship, the invading spirit speaks through the human. Surrounding people try to benefit from this. Lastly, in shamanism the spirit is domesticated and follows the will of the human host.³⁴³ To this, Mary Douglas added a forth category. Among the Western Dinka, a person loses consciousness, but this state is welcomed and outsiders do not interfere with it.³⁴⁴ The list could be expanded further. In Africa, spirit possession is highly differentiated between cultures and their health systems.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁰ Lorna Marshall, "Kung Bushmen Religious Beliefs", *Africa*, vol. 32.3, pp. 221-252, 1962.

³⁴¹ Roger Bastide, Helen Sebba, *The African Religions of Brazil*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2007.

³⁴² Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession*, London: University of Chicago Press, 1985, pp. 4f.

³⁴³ Raymond Firth, *Tikopia Ritual and Belief*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1967, p. 296.

³⁴⁴ Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, London: Routledge, 2003, pp. 83f.

³⁴⁵ Steven M. Friedson, *Dancing Prophets*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 122.

Spirit rituals, in which music and dancing play a prominent role, are the *malombo*, *majinn*, *vimbuza*, *madzoka* and *nantongwe* in Malawi (added could be the musical repertoire of some initiation rites). The possession cult within a traditional health system most viable for comparison with the Zionists is *vimbuza*. It is in the region, the Ngoni use it and are incorporated into it, there is literature on the subject and on record are direct statements from Zionists concerning *vimbuza*. Music is of central importance in *vimbuza*. The drumming serves to “heat up” the dancers, ready for an encounter with the spirit(s). On the other hand, music and dancing is believed to have an effect on the ancestors, too;³⁴⁶ it can exorcise them.³⁴⁷ The patient or the *nchimi* “dances his sickness” and while doing so, goes into a divinatory trance in which the ancestors reveal diagnosis.³⁴⁸ Friedson does not believe that the dancers go into a total trance state; the conscious will is not taken over by the spirit.³⁴⁹ He does use the term, though, and there is no doubt that *vimbuza* accomplishes psychic manipulation to a high degree resulting in altered states of consciousness. The music creates a world of its own, in which the protagonist can forget any other world.³⁵⁰ The dancing goes on for many hours, always at nighttime in an open air setting. Speaking of ancestral spirits, there indeed is an external intrusion. Friedson, who subjected himself to the rite, felt this, too, although possession, as he writes, does not occur through the dance. They dance because they are already possessed.³⁵¹ All of *vimbuza* happens while the drumming goes on. “*Transformations and transactions between vimbuza, mizimu, and Tumbuka occur not through music but in the music.*”³⁵²

The first observation when comparing *vimbuza* and the Zionists’ dancing should come from the Zionists themselves. They all oppose, nay

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³⁴⁷ Axel-Ivar Berglund, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989, pp. 41, 236f.

³⁴⁸ Steven M. Friedson, *Dancing Prophets*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 9.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 68.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 168ff.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 99.

condemn, any cult of affliction, *vimbuza* included. The church closest to the main venues of *vimbuza*, the Zion Christian Prophecy Church (11) categorically rejects *vimbuza*.³⁵³ To them, it ranges under traditional religion, which makes all its adherents candidates for evangelism by the church. A dance among the Chewa, *gule wamkulu*, which has far less spiritistic undertones than *vimbuza*, is still strongly rejected by the Zionists.³⁵⁴ To Zionists, the *scandalon* in such cults is the ancestral connection, which they consider as spiritism, strictly outlawed in Leviticus. We asked all other denominations and the answer was uniform: followers of traditional religions are still in the darkness. Their practices are considered 'heathenish' and Zion has nothing to do with them.

I suggest that the Zionists' state of mind during their singing is ecstatic, but not trance. The best term I found for this is from a commentary on the Gospel of Luke. Talking about Simon's exaltation in the *nunc dimittis*, Geldenhuys calls it "*restrained ecstasy*."³⁵⁵

One reason why Zionists are not dancing out of the frame is the sequence of their dance patterns. If they would heat themselves up according to the *vimbuza* type, then the faster dance would be the culmination of the service. But it is not. *Seji* follows *kubonga*. The entire liturgy is an escalating progress first into and then within the spiritual field. Zionists enter the spiritual field by means of music. Once there, they can easily silence the drums and continue in prayer. They are not lost in the music, but, in good mystic tradition, in their God. The trance-like states of the shamans and in *vimbuza* are reached by dancing and becoming one with the music and later with a spirit. Eliade called shamanism a "*technique of ecstasy*."³⁵⁶ In contrast, the Christian mystics entered a state of spiritual exaltation through silence, solitude and

³⁵³ Int. Archbishop Stanley L. Hara, Archbishop McLaud T. Kacheche and Archbishop Paul S. Kapenga Hara, Mthebama headquarters, 13.7.2005.

³⁵⁴ Int. Archbishop Kanjere, Blantyre, 18.4.2005.

³⁵⁵ Norval Geldenhuys, *The Gospel of Luke*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951, p. 119.

³⁵⁶ Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, Princeton University, 1964, p. 4.

immobility; see for example Teresa of Avila.³⁵⁷ In the same vein, Arbman ascribes the visions of Christian mystics to states of ecstasy, not trance.³⁵⁸ By choosing the slower dance as the climax of the service, the Zionists follow a Christian tradition, not African lore.

Another feature during their services is the control which is permanently exercised. An anthropologist might well speak of 'controlled effervescence.' The drummers are happily at work, but, contrary to *vimbuzi*, they are never in command of the event. What strikes the observer in a Zionist service is the controlled exuberance, how the rompishness is yet ordered and how everything, even spiritual frolicking, happens within a given time frame. Rouget's assumption is for music "*to socialize mental states; music brings emotions under cultural control.*"³⁵⁹ Contrary to *vimbuzi*, Zion's drummers are always under control and so is the rest of the crowd. Musicians have to stop at the wink of the *mlevi* or prophet and it would be strange to imagine that they cannot stop themselves from drumming. While prophets provide ecstasy, the *alevi* create order. They have more authority and trust in the local church and will be keeping their cool. The Malawian scene thus confirms Kiernan's observation among South African Zionists: their meetings dramatize ritual cycles for issues needing resolution. While they meet, shifts can be observed: from chaos to order, from uncontrol to control, from sickness to health.³⁶⁰

Other factors do not favour trance among them. Douglas interpreted trance to occur in societies with a weak social grid.³⁶¹ One example for this is *tarantism*, medieval dancing,³⁶² which followed in the wake of the

³⁵⁷ Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession*, London: University of Chicago Press, 1985, p. 6.

³⁵⁸ Ernst Arbman, *Ecstasy or Religious Trance*, Uppsala: Svenska Bokförlaget, n.d., 1970.

³⁵⁹ Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985, p. 323, in: Steven M. Friedson, *Dancing Prophets*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 123.

³⁶⁰ James Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1990, p. 103.

³⁶¹ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, London: Routledge, 2002, p. 212.

³⁶² Ioan M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, London: Penguin Books, 1971, pp. 41ff.

bubonic plague.³⁶³ Similar social conditions are not in place among the Zionists, as the sections about the church's hierarchy and family will show. I described, too, how the dancers do not touch each other in all their formations and circles. The use of touch, however, is a common feature in trance dances.³⁶⁴

Denominations which are "*ya bata*" do not employ music to enter the spiritual field. They are, by comparison, not in so much need for space to move. In their church buildings the altar (*gome* in Chinyanja) features more prominently than in the more musical churches. Their services culminate in healing, too, but this spiritual field is not entered by the help of music, neither are they more sacramental when compared to the 'noisy' *malinkaka* churches. The "*ya bata*" churches do not even display ecstasy.

In conclusion, drumming and dancing must be understood as forms of prayer within Zionism. It is not an attempt to contact spirits, but a petition for God to heal.³⁶⁵ Music is the most established gateway into the spiritual field, similar to glossolalia's function among the Pentecostals. Zionists get enthusiastic along the lines of their emotional fabric and cultural condition, but do not fall into trance states. After all, the cases where healing does not happen prove that the Zionists are not the ultimate manipulators.

While ecstatic praise has its harbingers in Hebrew culture and on the African continent as well as in the annals of US-American slave history, diagnostic prophesying is an element which has come into Zionism through local traditions. Prophecy in the Old Testament is moral speech, anchored in canonical Law, infused with futuristic outlooks.³⁶⁶ In the newer covenant, prophecy is no longer social or political critique, but happens exclusively in the church, edifying the believers and stirring them

³⁶³ Barbara Tuchmann, *Der ferne Spiegel*, Hamburg: Spiegel Verlag, 2007, pp. 311f.

³⁶⁴ Anya P. Royce, *The Anthropology of Dance*, Alton: Dance Books, 2002, p. 199.

³⁶⁵ Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 105.

³⁶⁶ Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets*, Peabody: Prince Press, 1999, p. 61.

to renewed commitment.³⁶⁷ Prophets speak the mind of God and they might uncover hidden spiritual motivations in men; 1. Cor.12:11. Some therapeutic instructions given to sick people during Biblical times have a prophetic lead; 2. Kings 5:10; John 9:7. Nevertheless, the practice of diagnosing physical sickness is not part and parcel of Biblical prophecy.

Stemming from research in the 1940s, Sundkler already pointed out how close the Zionist prophet and the traditional diviner were.³⁶⁸ Two generations later, Anderson still finds the “...*the dividing line between the ancestor who inspires diviners and the Holy Spirit who inspires prophecy...sometimes very thin indeed.*”³⁶⁹ From Zimbabwe, a Zionist had this to say,

Long ago, before Christianity came, we were enlightened by our *nganga* concerning family matters. So that is the most important thing in the Church: ‘*Zvinhu zvose ndinoprofitirwa kufanana kushoperwa,*’ ‘Everything is revealed to me through prophecy in the same way as ... through traditional divination.’³⁷⁰

Not only the diagnostic practise, but the partitioning of healing offices has its origin in local healing custom, too. In Malawi, I observed a clear distinction between prophets and healers, wondering where this has come from. The reason why prophets do not heal and healers do not divine is because the Ngoni diviners did not always treat patients

³⁶⁷ Ulf Strohhahn, “Pentecostalic Approaches and Manifestations in Early Malawian Church History”, Zomba: University of Malawi, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, 1999, p. 8.

³⁶⁸ Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets of South Africa*, London: Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 109.

³⁶⁹ Allan H. Anderson, *African Reformation. African Initiated Christianity in the 20th Century*, Trenton and Asmara: Africa World Press, 2001, p. 14.

³⁷⁰ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol. 2, The Hague: Mouton, 1974, p. 276.

personally, but referred them to specialists.³⁷¹ At the same time, the prophets' power is curbed by the very fact that they do not heal. The traditional diviner relies on "every rumour of the country side."³⁷² Inspiration aside, also the Zionist prophet has other, more natural means of obtaining knowledge about people in the closely knit Zionist community. No matter how knowledge came to them, both diviner and prophet will present their information as a supernatural revelation to their supplicants. Common features end here. Some elements seem common, but have different origins. I already mentioned how both diviners and prophets wear prophetically designed dresses. But, with the Zionists, this tradition has clearly come to them through the *machona*. While external features are similar, internal matters bear less resemblance, namely their pneumatologies. The diviner will distinguish carefully between all kinds of malignant spirits; the prophet will declare any foreign intrusion evil and unwanted.³⁷³ Traditional spirit doctors will from case to case try to appease the spirit and work with it, while the Zionist prays for power to exorcise it. Above all, the Zionist prophet will call upon the Christian God for help and deliverance, whereas the *nchimi* strives to cooperate with ancestral spirits.³⁷⁴ Zion's healing system, therefore, is comprehensible to the African mind,³⁷⁵ but can in essence not be equated with traditional medicine.³⁷⁶

³⁷¹ Markku Hokkanen, "Scottish Missionaries and African Healers: Perceptions and Relations in the Livingstonia Mission, 1875-1930", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 34, no. 3, Leiden: Brill, 2004, p. 325.

³⁷² Cullen T. Young, *Notes on the Customs and Folk-Lore of the Tumbuka-Kamanga Peoples*, London: Frank Cass, 1970, p. 30.

³⁷³ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Zionism and Faith Healing in Rhodesia*, Leiden: Afrika-Studiecentrum, 1970, p. 40.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³⁷⁵ Allan Anderson, *Tumelo. The Faith of African Pentecostals in South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA, 1993, p. 132.

³⁷⁶ Allan Anderson, *Zion and Pentecost*, Pretoria: UNISA, 2000, p. 140.

5. Theology: Salvation and the Church

“...to try to grasp the essence of such a [religious] phenomenon
by means of physiology, psychology, sociology, linguistics, art
or any other study is false;
it misses the one unique and irreducible element in it
– the element of the sacred.”¹

Salvation is the central tenet of Zionist thought and life. All distinctions between them and us, in and out, pure and impure, healthy and sick, sinner and saint, danger and safety, blessing or curse – have salvation as their underlying theological concept. All aforementioned issues like healing, dancing or apparel relate to and are based on the belief in redemption. Their theological concept of redemption determines the social hierarchy in the churches as this chapter will show. It is not difficult to see that Zionism is a total way of life. Entering into it will require drastic and encompassing changes. Those measures, however, will need to be justified. They need to be energized, too, from somewhere.

The change that man undergoes through redemption is, without doubt, the biggest event in the believer's life. The change as such is referred to as *conversion*. It is an individual's turning from indifference or from an earlier form of piety to Zion's tenets, especially their moral standards. Implied is the consciousness that “*a great change has been brought about and that, in the light of the experience, the old was wrong and the new is right.*”² This is summed with the word, “*Ndapulumutsidwa,*” (I have been saved). Thereafter, helping others to come to the same experience becomes the believer's imperative. Zionism

¹ Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, London: Steed and Ward, 1958, p. xiii. In: Brian Morris, *Anthropological Studies of Religion*, Cambridge: University Press, 1987, p. 176.

² Arthur D. Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*, Oxford University Press, 1937, p. 7, in: Jack D. Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion*, New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 194.

is, like Pentecostalism, driven by an urge to evangelize.³ This is approached and expressed very differently between Zionists and Pentecostals, but the foundation, the reason for being in this world, is the same: to reach the lost with the Good News.

Becoming redeemed is a personal and often silent process, but the ensuing signs and proclamations are loud and public. Zionists sport their spiritual status. Once converted, the individual's conversion testimony will be told and become part of the church's salvific repertoire. Such testimonies are then included in the congregation's evangelistic toolbox. They will be retold whenever the situation demands it. A conversion story wherein healing plays a prominent part is especially effective when encountering sick unbelievers. Other concerns, which can be addressed accordingly, are in the areas of alcohol or tobacco addiction, spirit affliction and marital problems.

It is therefore important to look at their theology in this chapter. Zion's soteriology is markedly down to earth. It includes their diet, the fight against witchcraft and spirit afflictions. This chapter contains sections about the Bible in Zion, their prayer life and the meaning of their ordinances. Everyday life and church organization develop out of this theoretical-theological concept. Their settlements are yet the strongest material expression of salvation thought, while the church organization helps to keep the machinery running, which is a proclamation of salvation. Leaders are installed and respected if they are personified examples of salvation. One of the foremost requirements of future *alevi* and bishops is evangelistic success.

1. Salvation: Between Law and Grace

On a Saturday morning in April 2005, we sat with Archbishop Kanjere and his members at the veranda of his house at Chileka. During the interview, Brother Gray, a local deacon of the Entopia Zion Church (14), answered my question about salvation. "*Salvation consists of refraining from bad things and doing good.*" He certainly reflected years of exposure to

³ Int. Thomas E.W. Kayenda, Salima, 28.7.2007.

standard Zionist preaching. However, the emeritus archbishop was obviously not pleased with this statement and took over the explanation:

Salvation means to be born again. Your walk and your character has changed, it must change. That's the sign. Following the laws, dietary laws, are not about salvation, they just mean that you follow the Law. Also baptism, it cannot save us, it is not about salvation.⁴

There is a gap between these statements. The bishop's answer reflects salvation by faith, while the deacon's remark expresses salvation by works or by omission. Both explanations can be found in current Zionism, yet they are not debated polemically. It has been my observation that younger denominations and those Zionists churches, which sprung from other, non-Zionist churches, like the above mentioned Entopia Zion Church (14), have more traits of an evangelical concept of salvation. The bishop of Chipulutmutso Church (29), Kazuso Phiri, has an uncluttered view on the topic. *"We believe that man is saved by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and nothing else."*⁵ His congregations are Zionist in character, but the bishop's spiritual journey, which took him from the Church of Christ to the CCACZ, African Assemblies of God and Mpingo wa Atumwi, might have contributed to his understanding.

According to Deacon Gray's answer, to be a Christian means to abstain from vices. Three of them feature most prominently and are mentioned in most sermons: do not drink, refrain from smoking and do not commit adultery. In Zionist understanding, Christianity is thus defined negatively. That redemption is determined by forsaking sin is frequently expressed in their songs, too. *"Mwasakaniza,"* (*"You have mixed"* [true faith with paganism]) is a common theme. The leaders of the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3) explained that salvation comes from repentance.⁶ Here the

⁴ Int. Archbishop S. Kanjere, Entopia Zion Church, Mwansambo, Chileka, 23.4.2005.

⁵ Int. Bishop S.B. Kasuzo Phiri and Harry Patson Phiri, Dombolo, 1.3.2006.

⁶ Int. Mrs. F. Chaluluka, Rev. R.L. Gama, Rev. L. Mbewe, Rev. P. Makanani, Whwayo, 6.11.2005.

stress is still laid on discontinuing with vices, yet true remorse will, so they believe, show the way out of sin's entrapment.

Out of thirty denominations in the country, eight have the word *Sabbath* engraved in their names.⁷ However, these numbers are not representative. If compared to the total membership in the country, they gather about 10% of all Zionists. Therefore, the doctrine has not taken over Malawian Zionism. On the other hand, Sabbathism is a strong enough tenet to cause schisms and provide identity to the breakaway group. This must be emphasized, for doctrinal differences are, to the best of my knowledge, not the foremost reason why churches in Malawi split from each other. Personal differences and leadership aspirations are the most common dividers. For other countries, some researchers have grouped these churches outside of Zionism.⁸ So far we cannot go. Zionism in the country can accommodate Sabbathism without bursting at its doctrinal seams. The general Hebraist tendency relieves the tension; and the common markers between Sabbath and non-Sabbath denominations are much stronger than this single issue.

Most Sabbathists adhere to the Christian Apostolic Sabbath Church in Zion (13). Archbishop Lipenga Magagula stated that a person can not really be saved without observing the Law.⁹ A person becomes a Christian by faith, but afterwards needs to abide by the commandments for redemption to take permanent effect. In this way, salvation in the church has a legalistic tinge. The Sabbath, however, does not stand on its own. Keeping it is seen as but one part of a code of laws which must be followed for salvation. The Apostoli Zion Sabbath Church (27) follows the Sabbath strictly from Friday sundown until Saturday eve. They do not cook, but eat leftovers from Friday. Members avoid travelling on that day; all kinds of work are shunned. There is tension in the church over the

⁷ See Stefan Höschel, "On Sabbath Keeping and Sabbath Theology among Younger African Churches", *Spes Christiana*, Friedensau: Theologische Hochschule, vols. 18, 19, 2007-2008, pp. 39-52.

⁸ Berthold A. Pauw, *Religion in a Tswana Chieftdom*. London: Oxford University Press, 1960, p. 135.

⁹ Int. Bishop Pearson Fasinesi Lipenga Magagula, Kunthawira, Chileka, 12.5.2005.

Sabbath issue, mainly because branches in Nchalo and Mapelera do not observe the holy day. In these towns Saturday is market day and believers find it too hard to give up this source of income.¹⁰

a. Dietary Laws

While abstaining from smoking and drinking is a requirement made by many Pentecostal, charismatic and evangelical churches in the country, in Zionism it only forms the spearhead of a much wider canon of dietary laws. All Malawian Zionists are to keep the nutritional rules set down in Leviticus 11. Strangled animals are not to be eaten; carcasses are never to be touched. Alcohol and tobacco are from the devil and even tea is suspect. Mr. Dambo, a member of the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3) at Chileka, drinks his tea without tea. He sips his “tea” with hot water, milk and five spoonfuls of sugar, but refuses to use *masamba*, the tea leaves.¹¹ Like him, many Zionists regard tea and coffee as an intoxication, but this has never risen to such strong doctrinal status as the avoidance of strong liquors and beer. Another reason why some Zionists refuse to drink tea is the fear that someone may get at them by contaminating the leaves, which is a fear of sorcery.¹² The Malawian members of the Zion Christian Church (8) are not of the same persuasion when it comes to coffee. As stated, they see it as their transnational duty to import *Zion Perfect* chicory and coffee mixture, for it is produced at headquarters in South Africa.

The CCACZ does not allow its members to grow tobacco. This is significant since tobacco is Malawi’s number one export crop and many small holders depend on this cash income, also in the Ntcheu district. (Pentecostals are more pragmatic. In the Apostolic Faith Mission, for example in Mchinji, where many tobacco farmers live, growing the leaves and making a living is allowed, but smoking them is prohibited.) The New

¹⁰ Int. Bishop Gresan Kamwendo, Mpembu, Ndirande, 12.11.2003.

¹¹ Int. Mr. Lastin Dambo, Nyambadwe, 11.11.2004.

¹² James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990 p. 230.

Zion Church (15), a split-off from the CCACZ, allows believers to grow tobacco and thus lessens its member's pangs of conscience.¹³

Dietary laws can be stressed to such an extent that they serve as a watershed between saved and unsaved. Listening to this preacher, one might get the impression that to be a pagan or a believer hinges on the question whether one smokes or not:

Some are allowed to smoke while others are not allowed by their churches, some say something and others say the opposite, though they belong to one family but have different faiths and doctrines, peace be unto us.¹⁴

In a similar vein, ducks and fish without scales are not allowed for human consumption in Leviticus (11:10). However, the people around Lake Malawi love their *kampango*. It is a large predatory catfish (*bagrus meridionalis*), endemic to Lake Malawi. Abstaining from such delicacy, especially if one's livelihood as a fisherman depends on it, is not an easy spiritual exercise, even for the most devout Zionist.

Alcohol abuse certainly is a problem in Malawi.¹⁵ Some argue that the Ngoni have an inclination toward beer drinking. Senior Chief Kachindamoto said about her own people, "*Yes, a Ngoni is a Ngoni when drunk.*"¹⁶ Zionists have declared an outright spiritual war on this. While beer chumming has been part of Ngoni culture for centuries, the white-robed Christian dancers have set up a purist counterculture to it.

Dietary taboos have been with the Ngoni since ages past. The Maseko and Nzunga clans had taboos concerning elephant and fish. Zulu taboos encompassed life's entry, e.g. regulations against abortion, and went all

¹³ Int. Bishop P.E. Makoko, Kaluzi, 28.2.2006.

¹⁴ Joseph Jimu, sermon, Zion ya Bata (2), Chidothe, Mlumbé, Zomba, 16.7.2006.

¹⁵ Rijk van Dijk, "Transnational Images of Pentecostal Healing: Comparative Examples from Malawi and Botswana", in: Harry G. West, Tracy J. Luedke, eds., *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 107.

¹⁶ Int. Senior Chief Kachindamoto, Kazembe Kayira, in: Piergiorgio Gamba, ed., *The Lamp*, no. 67, 9/2007, Balaka: Montfort Media, p. 17.

the way to the funeral, e.g. a corpse could not be buried in damp soil.¹⁷ But the Zionists have not automatically taken over traditional taboos. Should this be the case, then current taboos are seen as a natural given.

The more recent impetus to follow these laws came from America, since pig products were already forbidden in Zion, Illinois.¹⁸ The city was to be absolutely free from alcohol and tobacco, too. In a way, Dowie handed the Ngoni a new set of taboos on a plate. These were welcome, since the people lived in a time of perpetual crisis, in an ongoing liminal moment, when fixed markers can provide certainty. In case of the Ngoni, the entire generation born around the year 1900 was in a state of liminality,¹⁹ betwixt and between their former glory and current calamity, home and the migrant exile, the language of their parents and the Chinyanja spoken in the area, the traditional religion that had failed to provide power to their ethnic group and other cults and religions, among them Christianity, which increasingly found their way to Malawi. Zionism, born in exile and inbred with the concept of exile, has always been in a hostile environment and needed pollution rules to symbolically deal with threats from inside and outside the camp. They found taboos in the Bible, some of them pointed out by J.A. Dowie, others resembling traditional prohibitions quite closely. These taboos created order in an otherwise messy social milieu.²⁰

One reason why Zionists define their status as believers negatively has a social dimension. A multitude of outside threats endanger their spiritual walk, their church unity and family harmony. Adultery disrupts marriage and family. Salvation, so they stress, improves people's behaviour and leads to stable marriages. Alcohol and tobacco are "*expendable*

¹⁷ Axel-Ivar Berglund, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989, pp. 58f.

¹⁸ Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985, p. 183.

¹⁹ Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967, pp. 93-111.

²⁰ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966, p. 15.

luxuries."²¹ They are 'social sins' which often take place in taverns, pubs and dark alleys, all places which a good Zionist will shun. Moreover, they cost money. Alcohol or tobacco addiction will weigh heavily on the sparse income of an average Malawian household. Saving a father or even a mother from squandering the few kwacha in a tavern is indeed a family-friendly religion. I see this social aspect as the foremost reason why Malawi's Zionists have rejected those drugs. Their culture would have allowed it, the Bible is silent or ambivalent on the subject. In South Africa, the Zionists rejected alcohol on political-racial grounds, for the "Ethiopian" churches in South Africa usually stem from the older Protestant mission churches; mainline Scandinavian and German missionaries allowed the use of tobacco, beer and medicine. Because of this, the Zionists refused to be branded as Ethiopian and even excommunicated those displaying "*Ethiopian tendencies.*"²² In Malawi, however, Ethiopianism happened on a much smaller scale and Zion as such has never been in touch with beer-drinking missionaries.²³

These social reasons for keeping taboos have an even wider meaning, as they apply to the churches and the Zionist movement as a whole. Based on Douglas' theory that the human body represents the social body, we can better understand why the Zionists adopted the dietary laws.²⁴ Zionism is an exilic religion and they see themselves under threat. No lack of bogey men. Their physical bodies are the symbol of their church. The white robes proclaim their purity; dietary laws express the powers and the dangers which they collectively face. Taboos are a bodily

²¹ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990, p. 42.

²² Bengt Sundkler, *Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists*, London: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 46.

²³ Robert Gray, *Black Christians and White Missionaries*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990, p. 99.

²⁴ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, London: Routledge, 2002, p. 142.

task, yet they carry the greater responsibility of “*boundary maintenance*” for the entire congregation.²⁵

Becoming a Zionist means that after the salvation experience, holiness will follow suit. They set themselves apart – and do so mainly by their appearance and these dietary rules. The believers are set apart *from* society, and they are set apart *for* God, for the food laws express ‘*holiness unto the Lord*.’²⁶ In their sermons and testimonies, the believers use physiological interpretations to justify and illustrate the dietary laws. Not one denomination allows pork to be consumed. Pigs are indeed seen as impure animals in Malawi, known to have even dug up human corpses in their quest for food. Such things are referred to; they are ridiculed and compared to human behaviour.²⁷ Those churches rejecting biomedicine group pork and aspirin into the same class. They defile the body and destroy the fellowship between God and man. Furthermore, those animals allowed for human consumption in Leviticus are pastoral and can be domesticated. Cows, sheep and goats can be easily herded, they live in a ‘covenant relationship with man.’ The Ngoni, with their skill and preference for cattle (see chapter 6), had no difficulty to emulate this Old Testament way of life. It is therefore no wonder that Levitical laws have certain attractiveness to the believers. This is true for all of rural Africa, where Christianity has made advances. Samuel Ajayi Crowther, the great nineteenth-century Yoruba missionary bishop, thought that Leviticus should be among the first books of the Bible to be translated.²⁸

Another reason for defining salvation negatively must be seen in their traditional religious background. The laws were welcomed to uphold a structure known from traditional religion, while the actual content changed from witchcraft-induced taboos to Jewish legalism. Salvation by works and salvation by omitting remove these Zionist groups from the

²⁵ Nancy T. Ammerman, *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in a Modern World*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987, p. 126. In: Jack D. Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion*, New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 287.

²⁶ Isidore Epstein, *Judaism*, London: Penguin, 1959, p. 24.

²⁷ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, London: Routledge, 2002, pp. 64-71.

²⁸ Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000, p. 12.

central Protestant tenet of justification by faith. Moreover, slavishly keeping the Levitical laws negates salvation by grace. They certainly satisfy a long-established order of structural religion as opposed to a religion of salvation.²⁹ Traditional African religions were structural in the sense that they governed every detail of life through ceremonies, rituals and taboos. Life might have had more certainties back then, although presiding over the implementation of structural religion demanded even closer watchfulness and legislative skills from its guardians. With such responsibility came a good amount of authority. Whoever calls the taboos will have a measure of social control. Laws, including the dietary laws under discussion here, call for executive authority. The flux of events and the calamities during the colonial episode, which exiled Malawians in their own country, tossed people into uncertainties. Apart from the spirit-liberating aspects, which Christianity readily provides, Levitical laws were called in to assist in upholding structural rule, thereby “*giving form*” to religion.³⁰ In a way, they squared the circle. For the Zionists’ combination of emotional spirituality and legalistic piety is indeed a rare blend; perhaps Jewish mystics serve as the closest parallel in the history of religion. The German philosopher George Simmel (1858-1918) found the religion of his day and age too demanding. A good antidote against all the legalism would be a spirituality which is nourished by experience and expressed through emotions.³¹ Zionism is a late manifestation of Simmel’s theoretical construct.

Their legalistic side, however, has been developed by creative processes. On one hand, not all Levitical laws were adopted and, on the other hand, issues, on which the Mosaic Law is silent, have been legislated by the churches.

²⁹ Evans M. Zuesse, *Ritual Cosmos. The Sanctification of Life in African Religions*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985, pp. 7f.

³⁰ Jack D. Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion*, New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 279.

³¹ Inger Furseth, Pål Repstad, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion*, Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 37f, 2007.

I found the following pattern:

- a. All laws that declare and amplify identity, not so much in a cultural, but in the biological sense, have been taken over into Zionism. Especially rituals and laws upholding the division between the sexes have been adapted, e.g. the purification ceremonies after childbirth (Lev.12:4), see chapter 6. Beards are not trimmed (Lev. 19:27); no clothing allowed characteristic of the opposite sex (Deut. 22:5).
- b. All laws which declare purity/impurity are followed. Some of those can be grouped under a., but all dietary laws come under this heading. Things which are ambivalent or unknown to the Bible are rather prohibited, e.g. coffee, tea and tobacco.
- c. Not followed are laws which have a cultural background too remote to understand, architectural (Deut. 22:8, building a fence around the roof) or geographical issues, which are not applicable in Malawi. Surprisingly, this refers to festivities, too. Zionists have not adopted the Old Testament calendar. Like the Jews of old, the Ngoni had a feast of first fruits, but Zion would have nothing of it. Sabbathism did not come into Zion because of the Bible, but from those Zionists that had come out of a Sabbathist church.
- d. All laws which call for drastic (physical) measures are not executed, but may be symbolized. Not one denomination reported to have sacrificed animals, neither are physical punishments known in the churches. Circumcision has its tradition in Africa and the Old Testament, but is not carried out among the Zionists (with the exception of the Entopia Zion Church [14], see chapter 6).

We have, therefore, a process of conscious traditioning evident among the Zionists. They have selected their religious tradition, beginning with the name Zion, carefully choosing and rejecting tenets and rituals, according to their identity needs, their Scriptural understanding and their traditional religious background. Monica Wilson observed this rather early in the 1930s among South Africans and called it '*selective conservatism*.'³² Neither is Janzen's concept of 'ritual inversion' far from

³² Linda E. Thomas, *Under the Canopy*, Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1999, p. 81.

the processes described here.³³ In our case, this has led to a religious system in Malawi, which stretches to all aspects of life. Zion's new-found legalism *desecularizes* the shattered and compartmentalized aspects of their existence. Although nothing is "extrareligious" in Africa, I agree with Weber that taboos are religious building blocks, which harness religion to extrareligious purposes.³⁴ Taboos, in our case, allow first of all making a distinction, to declare a spiritual identity and certainty. They are set markers of fellowship "with the Heaven," as the Zionists say, constructing fixed beacons around the spiritual field. Taboos have a social dimension, too, as described, and are regarded as healthy measures.

In this way, although edging on a pit that has "salvation by works" written all over it, the dietary laws might not be a means of salvation in their own understanding, but an expression of it. Contrary to the Pentecostals and Charismatics, the conversion experience is not laboured to the point. Many Pentecostals can give the precise date, down to the minute, when they became believers. Redemption is a more holistic process in Zion, which requires not only a complete break with the past, but the embracing and display of something entirely new.³⁵ There are set markers along the way. In chapter 6, we will find how Zionists have taken over traditional rites of passage and spiritualized them to harmonize African worldview with their understanding of salvation.

³³ John M. Janzen, "The Tradition of Renewal in Kongo Religion", in: N. S. Booth, ed., *African Religions: A Symposium*, New York: Nok Publishers, 1977, pp. 69-115.

³⁴ Brian Morris, *Anthropological Studies of Religion*, Cambridge: University Press, 1987, p. 71.

³⁵ Birgit Meyer, "Make a Complete Break with the Past. Memory and Post-Colonial Modernity in Ghanaian Discourse", in: Adrian Hastings, ed., *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Leiden: Brill, vol. 28, no. 3, pp. 316-349, 1998. Eva Keller, *The Road to Clarity: Seventh-day Adventism in Madagascar*, New York: Palgrave, 2005.

2. The Concept of Evil: Witchcraft and Spirit-Affliction

“Witchcraft...
is the active embodiment of that brooding anger
which in Africa is the essence of sin.”³⁶

In connection with salvation and its expression through dietary laws, the underlying concept of evil must be discussed. Cultures with strong taboos surrounding eating are often concerned with witchcraft and other manifestations of evil.³⁷ I can confirm this for Malawi in general and with the Zionists in particular.

Zion’s offer of salvation got through to many Malawians because of what they could be saved *from*. Defining witchcraft, we have to follow the Zionists’ own understanding of it, not any theoretical anthropological concept. In their usage, the word *ufiti* (witchcraft) has several meanings and abstractions.

The most common is for *ufiti* to mean evil in general. This evil comes from the outside and endangers the harmony within the Zionists’ camp. Thus, the term *ufiti* has been broadened into an almost philosophical notion of evil. It has become, and these findings run parallel with Engelke’s observation in Zimbabwe, a “*catch-all phrase of scorn, shorthand for the dangerous things produced by practitioners of spirit outside Christianity*.”³⁸ Zionists do not think of actual witches every time the word *ufiti* falls. Synonyms in this sense are wicked or evil things and spirits (*zoipa* and *mizimu yoipa*).

Evil has, secondly, been given a Biblical notion among them. *Ufiti* sounds personalized in their expressions. Demons cause people to exercise *ufiti*. Slightly differing from the traditional idea that witches are real people who can turn into spirits, the Zionists have ‘spiritualized’ the concept: a witch is a real person, but what makes her wicked is demon

³⁶ John V. Taylor, *The Primal Vision*, London: SCM Press, 1963, p. 190.

³⁷ Evans M. Zuesse, *Ritual Cosmos. The Sanctification of Life in African Religions*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985, p. 230.

³⁸ Matthew Engelke, *A Problem of Presence. Beyond Scripture in an African Church*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007, p. 232.

possession. As this preacher claims, “...when the demons have entered into the hearts of people, the demonic person becomes an adulterer, a robber, a backbiter, a murderer and also a witch, burglar and other...”³⁹

Third, witchcraft, therefore, is taken seriously by the Zionists. Listening to another preacher makes this clear:

Even when you try to destroy them [charms], you will find them hanging in a jacket on the wall, when you throw them into the latrine pit, you will find they are coming back to you. There are some that are very resistant. If he says, ‘I will throw away these things myself,’ we will follow because we don’t want you to destroy these things on your own, for some of these things are very difficult to destroy.⁴⁰

With this, they follow the majority of the population, who believe beyond the shadow of a doubt that witchcraft is a substantial force. To say that “...the healing process presupposes a belief in sorcery” [among the Christian Zionists] means to put the cart before the horse.⁴¹ Zionists found witchcraft as a given, they did not construct it as a theoretical model which could then be applied to their healing theology. To say it as clearly as possible: taking witchcraft seriously (belief in witchcraft) has served the Zionists well. With this, they might be looked down upon by western academic minds, but were able to attend to the needs of their clientele. Sometimes the Zionists resort to ‘witchcraft’ to explain mischief, making it a substantial element in their theodicy. The current general overseer of the Apostolic Faith Church (7), Lewis Bengo, tells a sad story how his wife had been bewitched by a person living close by after quarrelling over a land issue. She passed away after a short illness.⁴²

³⁹ Mlevi Kalulu, sermon, CCACZ, Kampala, Blantyre, 2.7.2006.

⁴⁰ Minister Chilowa Banda, ZCC, sermon, Majiga, Ndirande, Blantyre, 9.7.2006.

⁴¹ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990 p. 229.

⁴² Int. E.G. Zingwa naBengo, Bishop L.Z. Bengo, A. Julius, Dzipirana vlg., Ntcheu, 17, 18. 8. 2005.

But we have to differentiate between an older, much more incarnate and epitomized idea of witches and the current concept of evil, also called witchcraft, which is the strain in modern Malawian society. Zionists have seen to either of them.

Anthropological literature is beset with the former concept, and it does live forth in contemporary Africa. Dark tales are told, good for headlines in some newspapers, of mostly women flying through the air on cardboard boxes, eating human flesh and committing all kinds of atrocious and pervert acts. Such speculations arise in societies, with their external boundaries clearly defined, internal relations confused and mixed of different peoples' groups.⁴³ It has been written about the Azande in West Africa, "*Only in those areas of society which were left unstructured by the political system did men accuse each other of witchcraft.*"⁴⁴ Drastic changes in life-style, such as labour migration and occupation, which plunged social relations into disarray, caused traditional coping mechanisms to fail. A feeling of guilt beset the people;⁴⁵ Europe during mediaeval times, ancient and colonial Africa fit this pattern. The Ngoni had "witch-smellers," called *izanusi*. Some of their practices have been accepted by the prophet-healer specialists among the Tumbuka, called *nchimi*.⁴⁶ The Tumbuka, on the other hand, impressed the newly arrived Ngoni with their own witch-repellent activities, namely the *mwavi* ordeal and the skill with which they used it.⁴⁷

The circumstances, under which Zion flourished in the country, were at the same time an ideal breeding ground for witchcraft proliferation.⁴⁸ The rise of Zionism in the country falls into a period of alternating and

⁴³ Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 117.

⁴⁴ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, London: Routledge, 2002, pp. 127f.

⁴⁵ Audrey I. Richards, "A Modern Movement of Witch-Finders", *Africa*, n.d., vol. 8/4, 1935, p. 459.

⁴⁶ Steven M. Friedson, *Dancing Prophets*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 87.

⁴⁷ H.L.Vail, "Religion, Language and the Tribal Myth: The Tumbuka and Chewa of Malawi," in: Matthew Schoffeleers, ed., *Guardians of the Land*, Gweru: Mambo-Kachere, 1999, p. 213.

⁴⁸ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990 p. 227.

rotating witch-finding movements, some of them employed poison-ordeals in order to “sniff out” the witch.⁴⁹ This haunted the population to such an extent that the British tried to stop it by decree. The administration, abysmally ignorant of anthropology, passed the *Witchcraft Ordinance* in 1911 that declared witch-hunting illegal and administering the poison ordeal an offence.⁵⁰ The legal argument was that since witchcraft is non-existent, both the claim to be a witch and the accusation by someone else would attract punishment. A good number of chiefs and village headmen were threatened, some ‘witch-doctors’ were actually arrested.⁵¹ Alas, this did not accomplish much, only that *mwavi*, *mchape* and other rites were no longer performed in public.

The second and most common occurrence of witchcraft, prevalent to this day, is in the form of a silent suspicion. It is witchcraft without the classic witch. The fear for someone to ‘use witchcraft’ is widespread. Neglected ancestral spirits can cause harm, but most mischief is attributed to *ufiti*. This kind involves different people with distinct roles in the drama. The malefactor is someone living close by. The suspect can be a neighbour, it can be a family member or a colleague at work who intends evil. If a distinction is made between witchcraft and sorcery, then *ufiti* is closer by, might even come from a family member, while sorcery has a more distant culprit. Anyhow, causation is hidden, but the overriding motivation to do harm arises from jealousy. Envy at the workplace and covetousness regarding the opposite sex are the classic sentiments. The person who intends evil goes and gets some ‘medicine’ with harmful potency. Sometimes hair, nails or other bodily samples from the person to be harmed are gathered, as this increases the spell’s power. (This is an old Nguni custom, too.⁵²) Spells might have been cast; some

⁴⁹ Joseph C. Chakanza, “Provisional Annotated Chronological List of Witch-Finding Movements in Malawi, 1850-1980”, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Leiden: Brill, vol. 15, no. 3, 1985, pp. 227-243.

⁵⁰ James Tengatenga, *Church, State and Society in Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere, 2006, p. 65.

⁵¹ Markku Hokkanen, “Scottish Missionaries and African Healers: Perceptions and Relations in the Livingstonia Mission, 1875-1930”, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 34, no. 3, Leiden: Brill, 2004, p. 334.

⁵² Donald R. Morris, *The Washing of the Spears*, London: Pimlico, 1994, pp. 34f.

magic concoction or harmful object could have been placed near the house. The targeted person might feel an attack coming, things are not going well, there is strain in the marriage or a child has had an accident. The suspicion is born and it is imperative to find out what one is up against. The next person to enter the drama is called *sing'anga*, wrongly called the witchdoctor. The *sing'anga* makes a living by thwarting the wicked attacks, mostly by selling anti-potions and other counter-acting devices. He or she is, however, also a masterful folk psychologist. With insight into family affairs, witty questioning techniques and some actual spy work, the *sing'anga* can go to the root of the problem. Now, there is some confusion concerning the reality of all this. True, there is oftentimes nobody who tries to harm, but it is suspected. The suspicion alone keeps this African industry going. The *sing'anga* as such is not the witch, but he does need an antagonist, if only for business' sake.

The churches do not deny that there are people in the community who are out to do harm.⁵³ Zionists believe that witchcraft can cause diseases.⁵⁴ The question, whether witches are factual or not is secondary, since they ascribe it all to a host of demons. Witches were, all over the world, scapegoats in societies. Zionists, too, know whom to blame: the devil and all evil spirits. With everything evil attributed to the devil, people were left to be seen as victims. A careful distinction between demons and ancestral spirits is made in the Zion ya bata church (2). As already described in the previous chapter, a woman came to attend the service one day. While praying, she fell down and displayed classic symptoms of possession. At first they thought that she was demon possessed, but after a while, they turned out to be ancestral spirits. The church's leaders called them *majini*, a word derived from the Qur'an.⁵⁵ Whereas in Islam, the *jinn* are a lower class of spiritual beings, the Zionists in Malawi use the word to describe harmful ancestral spirits; not in the same class but with

⁵³ Matthew Engelke, *A Problem of Presence. Beyond Scripture in an African Church*, Berkeley: University of California, 2007, p. 41.

⁵⁴ John Nindi, *Chirimba Christian Apostolic Church in Zion, Its Establishment, Organization and Beliefs*, Zomba: Kachere, 2006, p. 12.

⁵⁵ Surah Al Hijr 15:26-27.

comparable ferocity to the *ngozi* spirits in Zimbabwe.⁵⁶ The lady was then prayed over and “*she came back to her senses.*”⁵⁷ Her husband came the following day and confirmed that his wife had been pestered by ancestral spirits for a long time.

In most cases, Zion’s offer of salvation is an effective countermeasure. Many Zionists recorded instances of witchcraft and subsequent liberation from it. The believers fast, pray, lay hands on people, exorcise demons, sprinkle holy water and baptize. Such power encounters are understood by the people and they respond accordingly. Moreover, the churches have a special ministry to detect witchcraft activities, which may be aimed against them. The prophets and prophetesses uncover hidden objects through inspiration, they point fingers at people intending evil and they predict dangers, which bewitching might bring.⁵⁸ The churches counter spirit with Spirit. Their approach is not to deny witchcraft, neither to define it, never would they name someone a witch, but they combat any evil spirit coming their way.

Zion’s demonology spans a wide spectrum of various spirit-related ills. Mischievous ancestral spirits and misgiving spells are dealt with. When asked about healing testimonies, we often heard reports of spiritual afflictions, not physical malaise. Lichapa said that half of his members have joined the church because they understand how to rid people of afflicting spirits.⁵⁹ *Vimbuz*, as we have seen in chapter 4, is not only a cult of affliction, but people can be troubled by the *vimbuz* spirits themselves. Zionists and *Vapostoli* from the north testify to having been delivered from them, especially through baptism.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Zionism and Faith Healing in Rhodesia*, Leiden: Afrika-Studiecentrum, 1970, p. 48.

⁵⁷ Int. Jameson Office, Senior Inspector, Zion ya Bata (2) and other leaders, Salima, 29.7.2007.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Int. Moffat P. Lichapa, Zion ya Bata (2), Kamphata, 14.10.2007.

⁶⁰ Lucy S. Banda, *The Masowe and Maranke Apostles in Malawi: Dynamics of the Entry, Growth, Development and Impact, 1950-2002*, MA, Zomba: University of Malawi, 2003, p. 59.

Deliverance is not a one-off. After liberation, the people enter and stay in the church, “lest the spirits come back.”⁶¹ It is understood that permanent liberty from afflicting spirits can only be achieved by becoming a totally committed Zionist; a statement which we heard over and over during the interviews. Feelings of gratefulness and fear thus cement loyalty to the church. “I am convinced that if I had remained with the DRC, or had joined the Roman Catholic Church, these *midzimu* [spirits] would never have left us.”⁶²

Those afflicted felt that Zion’s salvific system, which includes the dietary laws, offers them protection from attacks. Even people accused of being witches found a sanctuary in Zion. Women have joined the Zion ya bata (2) to escape accusations of prostitution and witchcraft.⁶³ Even men adhere to the church to clear their reputation. Society then sees Zion as a haven against *ufiti*. By becoming a Zionist, a person’s change of association is so total that it leaves no room for the former suspicions.

The turn, however, has to be complete. Preachers rant and rave about the half-baked, the lukewarm and the uncommitted, who still try to mix Zion with other ways to prevent the mischief of witchcraft. Once converted, nobody is supposed to fight witchcraft with protective charms. Theoretically, a full fledged Zionist does not need to be afraid of *ufiti*. Conversion and baptism are supposed to close the final curtain over any witchcraft involvement, including all items related to it:

Let us now go to the Jordan for baptism. What kind of things do you keep at your house? We just say your property (meaning magical things such as charms, amulets, mascots etc.). We don’t mention these things directly; in Chinyanja we just say ‘katundu wanu mwabwera naye?’ Then later we see him or her coming with his or her katundu [baggage].⁶⁴

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Marthinus L. Daneel, *Zionism and Faith Healing in Rhodesia*, Leiden: Afrika-Studiecentrum, 1970, p. 20.

⁶³ Int. Moffat P. Lichapa, Kamphata, 14.10.2007.

⁶⁴ Minister Chilowa Banda, ZCC, sermon, Majiga, Ndirande, Blantyre, 9.7.2006.

Not one denomination allows its members to visit the *sing'anga*. There are some herbal healers, also called *sing'anga*, which, for example, the New Jerusalema Zion Church (19) permits to visit.⁶⁵ Be that as it may, the spirit *sing'anga* is not an address for Zionists. Going there is a sign of backsliding. He is a health broker outside of Zion's own system.

The approach of doing spiritual battle is a key element to the spirit churches' success on the continent. As I have already stated concerning Malawi's Pentecostals, the spirit churches were the first Christian movements in the country that actually met these needs of the population.⁶⁶ Schoffeleers contributes the Pentecostals' success in the Nsanje district to their spirituality.⁶⁷ *Vapostoli* churches win battles in the same arena and this has been interpreted as a reason for their growth.⁶⁸ The same rings true for the Zionists in Ntcheu and other parts of the country. People become Zionists in order to be saved from witchcraft and spirit affliction.

3. Healing as Part of Salvation

"Healing is the divine power from God."⁶⁹

a. Healing as Counter Sorcery

Still continuing the subject of witchcraft and spirit affliction, healing has aptly been called *counter sorcery*.⁷⁰ In Central African cultures, sorcery

⁶⁵ Int. Mlevi Salatieli Malopa, Mlevi Francis Nkhoma, M'gona, Lilongwe, 21.8.2007.

⁶⁶ Ulf Strohhorn, *Pentecostalism in Malawi: A History of the AFM*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005, pp. 59f.

⁶⁷ Matthew Schoffeleers, *Pentecostalism and Neo-Traditionalism: The Religious Polarization of a Rural District in Southern Malawi*, Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1985.

⁶⁸ Matthew Engelke, *A Problem of Presence. Beyond Scripture in an African Church*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007, pp. 230f.

⁶⁹ Int. Thomas E.W. Kayenda, Salima, 28.7.2007.

⁷⁰ Harry G. West, "Working the Borders to Beneficial Effect", in: Harry G. West, Tracy J. Luedke, eds., *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 38.

and witchcraft take place within the speech pattern of medicine.⁷¹ The Chichewa word *mankhwala* (medicine) therefore has variations of meaning: medicine, magic potion, poison (cup), elixir, aphrodisiac, protective medicine, amulet, fetish and lucky charm. Healing is *the* means to take on and overcome the effects of witchcraft, with prophecy and wizardry acting as counterforces. It has already been outlined how important prophetic instructions are in Zion's therapeutic methods. Just as witchcraft can be disarmed by obtaining the right information about it, so healing depends on knowledge about the cause of the sickness, the sickness itself and its remedy. As stated in the previous chapter, physical sickness is seen to have spiritual causes. Healing, which is a spiritual enterprise in the Christian context, fits the bill.

It is, however, not only spiritual. Healing methods in Zion are, in contrast to those of the Pentecostals, surprisingly material, providing a full set of counter measures which, although cause and effect are thought to be spiritual, provide for the patients to hear, feel, smell, taste and see their healing. Witchcraft is, after all, a very physical enterprise. "*The love of exuviae (blood, sweat, hair, urine, vomit, etc.) well expresses the disintegrated body image of the witch.*"⁷² Healing, therefore, has to be physical too; it must be clad in the same bodily symbols which were formerly distorted.

Physical means are an important addition in helping people to believe in the spiritual powers which are at work in the process. Witchcraft utensils, and much more anything employed in sorcery, accomplish their aims independent of the agent. People believe that the 'medicine' effects evil or good, free from any moral quality of the person behind it.⁷³ Theologians would say that African medicine works *ex opere operatum* – it is effected on its own, in the act of the operation.⁷⁴ Now, concerning

⁷¹ Ernst Wendland, Salimo Hachibamba, *Galu Wamkota: Missiological Reflections from South-Central Africa*, Zomba: Kachere, 2007, pp. 475ff.

⁷² Evans M. Zuesse, *Ritual Cosmos. The Sanctification of Life in African Religions*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985, p. 230.

⁷³ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol. 2, The Hague: Mouton, 1974, p. 338.

⁷⁴ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, London: Routledge, 2002, pp. 133f.

their healing officials, Zionists do *not* believe in any of their healing aids to work independently. They are, to illustrate it from church history, Donatists, and so they stress the ritual purity of anyone assisting in faith healing. (This is the reason why no ‘anti-witchcraft vaccination’ takes place in Malawian Zionism. Deliverance cannot come on a technical basis alone.) Yet they have not discarded material healing aids and symbols, as most Pentecostals have done. They justify these practices with the Bible, e.g. Acts 19:11f, “*God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out.*”

b. Holistic Salvation

Greek philosophy portioned man into body, soul and spirit. This thinking is different from the African and Hebrew concept of man, where the approach is holistic. Body, soul and spirit are existing as one, as a non-separable unit. A man in the Old Testament could not pronounce himself blessed in the spirit while his body was still suffering! In a similar way, Africans believe that religion is for the whole man.⁷⁵ In the older Testament, redemption had to be relevant for every area of life, including the body.⁷⁶ Salvation is such a wholesome event in our Malawian context, too, filled with life and aspects from all walks of life, that one could easily not see the wood for the trees. To make a surgical distinction between ‘spiritual reasons’ and ‘social reasons’ for one to become a Zionist is, in my psychological understanding of the conversion experience, almost impossible. Researchers have gone astray in either direction. What cannot be denied, however, is that all reasons have underlying spiritual currents.

Nothing exemplifies holistic salvation as faith-healing does. The process of healing, as physical as it may be, *can* include social healing (confession), reconciliation in marriage, a change of diet and the acceptance of a new, spiritual identity in Christ. The Zionists themselves strive for wholeness. As it was in Christ’s and Paul’s ministries, the believers hope that through the physical sensation of healing, people will

⁷⁵ Ernst R. Wendland, *Buku Loyera*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1998, p. 20.

⁷⁶ Francis MacNutt, *Healing*, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1983, p. 53.

come to a deeper level where the soul is touched and forgiven; Luke 5:17ff. Healing by itself is not salvation. Zion's leaders are busy to instruct their followers in all tenets of the faith. They admit that some are in the church just because of healing, or because a family member, one generation back, had been healed. Therefore with the healing, they stress the redemptive work of Christ.⁷⁷

Zion's success, starting in the 1920s, must be attributed to the fact that its theology was more holistic in comparison to any other church at that time. With them, the concept of Christian salvation had gone through a process of reformation, as it now included the long lost element of faith healing. It is not all syncretism in AICs. Many elements appear as rediscovered Biblical truths and therefore have reformatory character.⁷⁸ Healing is both, a doctrinal tenet, which the believers regard as their heritage, as well as an evangelistic method. Their theology connected to the culture and world view of Africans and fell into the dire, insalubrious health conditions at that time. The Christian faith became more palpable and understandable to the people. *"The historic reason for the first separations to form AICs were not about healing, but in the quest for an African church model."*⁷⁹

c. The Weight of Healing: Church or Cult?

The question is where to draw the line between holistic care and totalitarian control. When one element is so stressed, as healing is among the Zionists, it can become the overall mark of identity for the church. This sometimes happens at the expense of other vital tenets and leads to cultish behaviour. With cult is meant a religious group that gathers and derives its identity from one teaching or only from one teacher other than

⁷⁷ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol. 2, The Hague: Mouton, 1974, p. 188.

⁷⁸ Hans-Jürgen Becken, "Healing in the African Independent Churches", *Credo*, vol. 18, pp. 14-21, 1971.

⁷⁹ "Historisch lag der Grund für die ersten Separationen der AUK nicht in der Frage des Heilens, sondern in der Suche nach einer afrikanischen Form der Kirche." Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 157.

Christ. No question, healing has risen to prominence among the Zionists, but has it made them a cult? Have they healed the bodies but lost their souls? This research's framework included denominations to the left (*Vapostoli*) and to the right (Pentecostals) of the Zionists. Among all these denominations, the following ecclesiastic formations in regard to faith-healing can be discerned:

Salvation as Part of Healing

Some groups define themselves through the healing practices. No other healing systems are allowed and no other churches accepted. Healing is their prerogative, and so is salvation! In rare cases, such as the IPC in South Africa, the church is “*only for the sick*.”⁸⁰ Other extreme views are expressed. Sick members of God's Message Apostle Church, a *Vapositoli* church at Chileka, Blantyre, are told that healing is always what God wants and that any failure to receive it is due to their lack of faith.⁸¹ The older Zionist churches in Malawi can be grouped here, especially during the first and second generation in the country. As we have seen, the Zion ya Bata church (2) sees no need to rebaptize those Christians wishing to join their church that come from another Zion church which refuses biomedicine. However, should any Christian wish to become a member, whose former church allowed biomedical drugs, then he must submit himself to rebaptism. The drugs have not only defiled the body; they have, in their view, forfeited redemption. This striking example shows how their healing doctrine has infiltrated a higher ground, namely salvation theology. Zionist churches and others that stress healing this much have a tendency to form settlements, where their premonition about purity can be better exercised: Zion ya Bata (2) in Salima and the Mlonda Mission (or Watchman Healing Mission).⁸²

⁸⁰ Frederic Modise's International Pentecost Holiness Church as mentioned in: Allan Anderson, Samuel Otwang, *Tumelo. The Faith of African Pentecostals in South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA, 1993, p. 25.

⁸¹ Int. Pastor Nalunji, Chimwankhunda, 17.10.2002.

⁸² Int. Mr. Tembo (member of Watchman Healing Mission), Nkhata Bay, 6.6.2004. Joseph C. Chakanza, *An Annotated List of African Instituted Church 1900 – 1981*, Zomba: Sources

Religious groups like this have literally laid their souls into healing theology: they will not accept any biomedical treatment, even if it means death. The Seventh Day Apostoli Church of Mbale Mbuu (real name: Fredriko Brandson Jalazi), a *Vapostoli* Church, believes that those “*taking medical treatment will meet the wrath of God.*”⁸³

There have been premature deaths among the Zionists, too. Bishop Gomeza, overseer over the south of Malawi for the CCACZ, tells how his mother, Mayi Namaire, died in 1975. She had a condition in the digestive system, for which there was sufficient time to treat her, but she refused, even when people willing to help stood outside the house with a car ready to take her to hospital.⁸⁴ She made a conscious choice and said, “*It’s better to be with the Lord and be pure, than to live down here and be defiled.*”⁸⁵ The CCACZ claims to not have urged parents into any direction should their children fall sick. However, in the 1980s, some children of Zionist believers were attacked by measles. This happened at Chimutu, Lilongwe, at Bishop Velemu’s church. The entire national leadership was alarmed while the children suffered; even Bishop Kayange rushed to the village, for they wanted to gather as much spiritual manpower as possible. Two children died whose parents had refused to have them treated. Bishop Gomeza added a statement, which dumbfounded the researcher: “*...but six children died, whose parents had rushed them to hospital. So, what is that?*”⁸⁶

Independent healing cults are much more widespread in Mozambique than in Malawi. Different from Malawi, the Mozambiquan civil war caused a second, nationwide wave of material, social and mental destruction. This brought a second wave of healing movements about, starting in the late 1980s. Apart from traditional healers and healing churches, many are

for the Study of Religion in Malawi, no. 122, 1983. Joseph C. Chakanza, *Voices of Preachers in Protest*, Blantyre: CLAIM, 1998.

⁸³ Interviews Group Village Headman Matope, Safarao, Ndirande, 1.2.2006. Pastor Mchenga, Safarao, Ndirande, 1.1.2006. Pastor Mlangeni, Safarao, Ndirande, 13.1.2006. The Nation, Blantyre, 6.1.2006.

⁸⁴ Int. Bishop Thompson Gomeza, CCACZ, Ndirande, 20.10.2009.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

independent agents. They give themselves Biblical names like John, Peter and Paul and assume to have the spirits of those apostles, too. Although they employ an array of Christian symbols, they are not a church, but independent healing agents who sometimes succeed in building a cult around them. Interestingly, a good number of Mozambiquan healers owe their career to the refugee years here in Malawi. Many refugees, who had been in contact with Zion during their spell in Malawi, brought that religion back to Mozambique. They changed its tenets and some subtracted almost everything from Zion but healing. They are called *aneneri*, (Chinyanja for *prophets*) and began to appear in the Tete area in 1993.⁸⁷ Not many healers of this kind can be found in Malawi, but if so, then these religious healers have established healing systems where salvation is incorporated, but also subjected to it.

Healing emphasized

In these cases, the churches see themselves as holding an exclusive license for healing, yet a distinction is made between faith healing and salvation by faith. The healing system is still a closed setup, but this is separated from spiritual redemption. Funerals in Zion, one of them we will attend in the next chapter, manifest this theological notion. Instead of condemning the deceased for dying (because the faith was not strong enough or there was a wavering by taking biomedicine), the Zionist triumphantly carry the remains to their final resting place. Therefore, although the body might have been defiled, the soul is safe and sound. The ten oldest Zionist churches in the country, which initially belonged to the more extreme camp, have more or less moved into this group. And the nationwide trend is clear: while the oldest churches nervously cling to their ban of biomedical treatment, all other Zionist denominations, which have been founded since 1951, allow it.

⁸⁷ Tracy J. Luedke, "Presidents, Bishops and Mothers", in: Harry G. West, Tracy J. Luedke, eds., *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 43.

Moderate healing

To this cluster belong the majority of younger Zionist denominations and all Pentecostal churches in Malawi. These churches have softened their stand on absolute and exclusive healing and salvation has become more spiritualized. Healing is still emphasized and one can hear claims like: “The best pill is the Gospel.” Yet members of these churches might resort to take a pill *before* they ask for intercessory prayer. Faith healing still plays its role in evangelism, but is not used as a daily spiritual medical chest. They see medical doctors and their skills as a God-given gift to mankind, yet traditional spiritual approaches, such as the *sing’anga*, are shunned and condemned – at least that is the official line preached from the pulpits.⁸⁸

d. The No. 1 Recruitment Device

“The empiricism of faith, whether savage or civilized,
consists in miracles.”⁸⁹

Many pathways lead to Zion, but healing is the highway. It is by far the most important recruitment device and evangelistic tool. “*Often one hears them saying, ‘Jesus would never have had such a following if he had not given so much attention to the sick.’*”⁹⁰ In Zion ya bata (2), most people got converted through healing, reflecting the success of their founder’s healing ministry. The leaders of the Zion Church (30) reported that the majority of new people had joined them because of healings. Second came those attracted by the dancing and singing and only few became converted as they heard the Gospel and repented.

These results run parallel to observations in Zionist churches in other countries. Daneel contributes the rise of Zionism in Zimbabwe to faith-

⁸⁸ Gregory C. Mvula, Enson M. Lwesya, *Flames of Fire*, Blantyre: Assemblies of God Literature Center, 2005, pp. 138ff.

⁸⁹ Bronislaw Malinowski, *Sex and Repression in Savage Society*, Oxon: Routledge, 2007, p. 104.

⁹⁰ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Zionism and Faith Healing in Rhodesia*, Leiden: Afrika-Studiecentrum, 1970, p. 16.

healing. He describes the churches as a 'healing institute' and sees this factor as more important than cultural, social or political reasons, which other researchers had ascribed to the growth of the movement.⁹¹ For South Africa, West found out that most Zionists had joined because of healing (hopes).⁹² Statistics from SA show that 80% of those who joined the ZCC (8) have done so because of faith healing, added by 15% through a „natural process“ and the remaining 5% out of sheer conviction.⁹³

I have evaded one question in the preceding chapter because its answer belongs here: What happens if someone does get healed? The physical healing will then cement a loyalty to the church, which is often life-long. The sickness itself becomes the stuff of triumphant testimonies; the former patient is empowered by looking back and looking down on the former ailment. What formerly reduced him, now enlarges him.⁹⁴ The miracle will lead the novice to align his values according to Zion. As mentioned in chapter 3, Mr Kamwendo had stomach problems which no doctor could heal. He had undergone four major surgeries at Queen Elisabeth Hospital in Blantyre, all to no avail. One day in 1964, elder Maguja of the CCACZ at Ndirande prayed over Kamwendo and the man was miraculously healed. The entire family then joined the church. Kamwendo's son Gresan was at that time eight years old. The healing made such a profound impact on him that it anchored him firmly in Zion. He now serves as the bishop of the Apositoli Zion Sabbath Church (27).⁹⁵

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁹² Martin West, *Bishops and Prophets in a Black City: African Independent Churches in Soweto Johannesburg*, Cape Town: David Philip, 1975.

⁹³ Piet Naudé, *The Zionist Christian Church in South Africa, A Case Study in Oral Theology*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, p. 65.

⁹⁴ Meredith B. McGuire, *Ritual Healing in Suburban America*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991, p. 243.

⁹⁵ Int. Bishop G. Kamwendo, Blantyre, 12.11.2003.

4. How People become Zionists

“...we must view meaning and belonging as equal factors in our attempts to understand why people become religious.”⁹⁶

a. Backsliding and the Need for Evangelism

Among those churches interviewed about salvation, we found that an average of 20% of children born into Zion will openly declare to discontinue with the faith of their parents. Added to this must be an even bigger, yet blurred number of those, who do not officially backslide, but have moved to town and do not care to join a Zionist church there. With urbanization in full swing, many leaders in the churches are worried. There is much *choice* in the cities, worsened by the fact that Zion is hardly physically present in downtown Blantyre, Lilongwe, Zomba and Mzuzu. They do meet in the townships, for example in Mbayani and Ndirande in Blantyre, but the social surveillance is not the same as in the countryside. Should the younger generation opt out of Zion, then their departure is interpreted as backsliding. Outside temptations were too strong for them. Bishop Saguga said that a few youngsters had left the church due to their dietary restrictions. “*They wanted to go to the bush and eat mice.*”⁹⁷ Mlevi Newa of the CCACZ admitted to have lost a good portion of the younger Zionists. The young people were not willing to subject themselves to Zionist marriage customs; others were lost to the church due to “*immoral acts.*”⁹⁸

Thus, the ‘biological’ reason for being a Zionist is no safeguard for the churches’ future. In my estimate, all local churches depend on evangelism to recruit the next generation.

Yet atheism is not a viable religious choice in sub-Saharan Africa. Hardly anybody makes a full commitment to ‘backsliding.’ People move across denominations or even confessions; the majority opts for affiliation

⁹⁶ Meredith Mc Guire as quoted in: Inger Furseth, Pål Repstad, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion*, Aldershot: Ashgate, p. 122, 2007.

⁹⁷ Int. Sporo Saguga, Wiwiza Saguga, Jordan village, Ganya, 7.3.2008.

⁹⁸ Int. Frackson N.J. Newa, Joseph village, Chimutu, Lilongwe, 14.5.2008.

to some kind of church or form of Islam. Religion is not, as in Europe, absent or “*spread as a thin layer.*”⁹⁹ For former Zionists, Pentecostalism is the towering alternative. It is more affluent, international and white-collared, bearing all the features which attracted people to the cities in the first place. Joining a Pentecostal church is not seen as backsliding into paganism, but they say that a person “*has left Zion,*” which is bad enough. Moreover, Zionists might look down on Pentecostals, because they are quicker to baptize and accept people in their ranks. Seen from a Zionist perspective, Pentecostals demand a lesser commitment; the absence of costumes and the non-adherence to dietary laws are the scandalons. For many young people raised in Zionist families, the legalism collapses under its own weight; yet Pentecostalism offers them a religious continuation in the same spirit.

Furthermore, Zion’s theology makes room for total backsliding. They are not *once saved, always saved*. The believers are actually evangelized all over again on a weekly basis, if we conclude from their sermons’ contents. Reassurance of salvation can only be given to those who adhere to their walk of life. Zion’s moralizing preachers thrive on this fact, as we listen to Mlevi Tembo:

...it [the demon] discovers that Mr. Kalulu is not strong, so it says let us make him fall down, then the result is that Kalulu goes back to smoking habits.¹⁰⁰

No matter what he may say about him being a good Zionist who performed healing miracles over the sick and on prophesying and receiving revelations, this will be just...history because seven evil spirits have possessed his heart, hallelujah.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Inger Furseth, Pål Repstad, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, p. 149.

¹⁰⁰ Mlevi Tembo, sermon, CCACZ, Kampala, Blantyre, 2.7.2006.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

b. Evangelism

“It is not how high you jump
but how straight you walk when you come down.”¹⁰²

Evangelism is the believers’ reason-for-being in this world. Hastings calls Zionism “*a form of missionary Christianity*.”¹⁰³ The concept serves as their *primum mobile*, the main motivation for their work and ministries, which are unsalaried and yet consume most of their spare time. Every human being is either seen as saved or unsaved. A believer’s mission is to evangelize as many people as possible and to add to the ranks of his church, too. The most imperative mission, however, is to win one’s own family to the faith.

How do Zionists attract outsiders to their church? Apart from healing, they promote their faith through the spectacle of the Zionist service. The robed dancers, drummers and preachers all form a circle on their own, with the bystanders forming an outer circle. I have witnessed that the number of onlookers can easily reach several hundred. The leaders of the Samaria Zion Church (25) see the sequence of their service as enticing to outsiders. Many are first drawn closer to watch their colourful dresses and listen to their songs. This accomplished, a good number of bystanders will stay to listen to the sermon. This either “pricks” their hearts, meaning that they come under conviction of being sinners through the preaching, or they dare to go for healing prayers later.¹⁰⁴

General Overseer Mlangeni (30) ascribes the biggest evangelism success to the sisters in the faith who have fellowship with other women outside the church, e.g. when fetching water in the afternoons.¹⁰⁵ Their evangelism is a need-based approach, not an apologetic discourse. As the ladies talk about their problems, the believers testify about deliverance

¹⁰² Quoted from Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999, p. 206.

¹⁰³ Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa, 1450-1950*, Oxford: Clarendon Paperbacks, 1996, p. 500.

¹⁰⁴ Int. Nikisoni Zalengera Chawango, Manjawira, 14.10.2007.

¹⁰⁵ Int. National General Secretary and Mrs. Mlangeni, Ndirande, 7.9.2006.

from spirit affliction, how their marriage improved after becoming Zionists and how they found forgiveness for their sins. Such evangelism happens among men, too, but the interviews indicate that the propagation from woman to woman is far more successful.

Marriage, or rather the Malawian concept of it, adds to and subtracts from the ranks of Zion. A woman will be lost to the church if she marries a non-Zionist. This might be the reason why membership between the sexes is almost balanced in the classes: women are more approachable when it comes to recruitment, at the same time they leave in bigger numbers due to the traditional Malawian understanding of marriage – that a wife is to join her husband’s faith and congregation. Pfeiffer, who researched Zionist classes in Chimoio, Mozambique, counted twice as many female members.¹⁰⁶ For Malawi, the figures are different. Women comprise roughly 55% of nationwide membership. In the Zion Church (30) many women came to the church simply because they followed their husband’s church affiliation. For the Samaria Zion Church (25), Bishop Zalengera claims that 75% of the female membership has become Zionist simply by adhering to the faith of their husbands. In the New Jerusalem Zion Church (19) half of the female congregation at M’gona (Lilongwe) joined the church by following their spouses. There are changes on the horizon in rural society, which will allow women more space of their own. Nowadays, we hear of cases where the wife is active in a political party different from her husband’s.¹⁰⁷ In the Zion Church (30), some ladies worship without their husbands present. Yet these are still exceptions to the rule. The leaders admitted that they once had a sister trying to join the church against her husband’s will. He caused quite a stir *in* the church, so that in the end the leaders had to let her go.¹⁰⁸

Aside and beyond healing, many Malawians become Zionists because of spiritual reasons. (Chapter 6 shows that nobody becomes a Zionist for

¹⁰⁶ James Pfeiffer, “Money, Modernity and Morality: Traditional Healing and the Expansion of the Holy Spirit in Mozambique”, in: Harry G. West, Tracy J. Luedke, eds., *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 86.

¹⁰⁷ Int. Thomas E.W. Kayenda, Salima, 28.7.2007.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

economic reasons!) It is the group who, as Bishop Zalengera said, is “pricked in their hearts.”¹⁰⁹ The offer of salvation, which includes forgiveness of sins and a moral life style, is a ready attraction. The need-based approach in their evangelism includes spiritual needs, not just physical or social requirements. These findings are in line with similar research in Africa.¹¹⁰ And ever so often it is compassion and love, which the believers show, that attracts others to the fold. On record is the testimony of Mrs. N., a widow from Mbayani township, Blantyre. She joined the Zionists after the death of her husband. He had led an immoral life and was subsequently suspended from his church, the SDA. When he died, no pastor from his church attended the funeral. Instead, her Zionist neighbours came and consoled Mrs. N. This care made such an impact on her that she decided to join the church.¹¹¹

Their services do not provide for a decision moment. Contrary to the Evangelicals and Pentecostals in the country, Zionists do not make an alter call, they do not ask, “Who wants to give his life to Jesus now?” Closest to such an encounter is the prayer time that follows the slower *seji* dance. One can see individuals in fervent prayer, many are gripped by emotions and some are filled with the Holy Spirit. It is in such times that people start or renew their commitment as Christians.¹¹² It is an unguided experience, surprisingly free from human intervention.

Is becoming a Zionist easy? For sure, a full commitment will demand a high social admission fee. There are no free riders. The believers cannot hide their faith and any misconduct will be greeted with gloating and spite. In a small village community, making a full turn toward Zion is equivalent to a public renewal of wedding vows and an oath to business sincerity. The economic costs have to be considered, too. The churches do not extract cash from their members, but dietary restrictions and other

¹⁰⁹ Int. Nikisoni Zalengera, Manjawira, 14.10.2007.

¹¹⁰ Cyril C. Okorocha, *The Meaning of Religious Conversion in Africa*, Aldershot: Avebury: 1987, p. 209.

¹¹¹ Lucy K. Kapito, *Women in African Instituted Churches in Ndirande and Mbayani Townships*, Blantyre City, BA, Zomba: University of Malawi, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, 1995, p. 5.

¹¹² Int. Rev. Ereck E. Dauya, Ndirande, 21.5.2010.

bye-laws certainly make life more difficult. Hunting mice can be a strong temptation when hunger strikes, so is catching scale-less fish or farming tobacco. On the other hand, Zionists who work in town are known as industrious and honest workers. In South Africa, members of the star-bearing ZCC (8) have built up an excellent, nationwide reputation. On a smaller, more local scale, this rings true for Malawi, too. After this, there is not much fine print in becoming a Zionist. Whatever drew them to the church in the first place, after baptism and the first services danced in the prophetically designed robes, the believers are fully admitted.

In contrast to 'western' Christianity and urban Pentecostalism in Africa, salvation within Malawian Zionism is less individualistic and more group-oriented, especially in rural communities. Often husband and wife are baptized together with their older children.¹¹³ There are strong bonds beside the individual's decision. Family ties and the size of the church will determine to what extent the new believer will reap the benefits from his decision.

5. Prayer Life

“...there has been a total absence of individual prayers...
It is WE who live by prayer.”¹¹⁴

Any outsider who has heard Zionists pray will not forget the experience. This is, after all, perhaps the most striking feature in their spirituality, for their worship and intercession are remarkable, both in their intensity as well as in their duration. In West Africa, the term *Aldura* is used for churches which are designated *Zionist* in our region. It has been argued that the word *Aldura* characterizes any kind of Christian church which practises fervent prayer.¹¹⁵ Zionists in southern Africa have this hallmark, too. There is an almost total absence of “churchy” prayers. Not one invocation is learned or read, neither do they recite the Lord's Prayer.

¹¹³ Int. Thomas E.W. Kayenda, Salima, 28.7.2007.

¹¹⁴ Piet Naudé, *The Zionist Christian Church in South Africa, A Case Study in Oral Theology*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, p. 114.

¹¹⁵ http://groups.yahoo.com/group/aic_research/. 26.2.2010.

Instead, they are able to express a wide range of human emotion as they talk to their Lord. They cry their hearts out, they plead and beg, exalt, command evil spirits, they speak with great authority only to fall silent a moment later. Zionists, contrary to many western Christians, know how to lament in front of their God, which is, in my understanding, also a spiritual exercise contributing to mental health.

The believers put their trust in the power of prayer. It changes things, both in the physical as well as in the spiritual realm. The famine of 1949 also brought the Zionists to their knees. In the CCACZ, the local leader B. Cham'gomo climbed with his fellow believers onto a mountain to pray for rain. They did not perform any 'rain dance' as such (they say, "*rainmaking is for witchdoctors*"¹¹⁶) but danced, sang and prayed as had been their custom. They fasted for some days and at the end, the rain started pouring down. According to Cham'gomo's daughter, they had a bumper harvest next season.¹¹⁷

Dzunje Hill is where many CCACZ members flocked during the drought of 1986. The place is between Bawi and Kampepuza on the south-eastern side of Ntcheu Boma. They had made up their minds to intercede until the rain would come. And their prayers were answered soon.¹¹⁸ The classes are full of such testimonies, which spur the believers on to pray and expect an answer from the heavens for their problems.

Often ordinary meetings are not sufficient to meet a particular need or to quench their spiritual thirst. Most Zionist groups have their overnight prayer meetings. Their drums can be heard even in the vicinity of Blantyre and Lilongwe, disturbing the residents' evening tranquility. The members of the HACZ (3) have a special hill to which they pilgrimage every now and then. Those prayer vigils involve the entire church, both men and women praying together. The name of the hill near Lunzu is *Chikungoma*, but the Zionists call it their *chipululu*. That means *desert* and denotes both, the

¹¹⁶ Int. *Mlevi* Frackson N.J. Newa and other leaders of the CCACZ, Joseph village, Chimutu, 14.5.2008.

¹¹⁷ Int. Mayi Mpatse, CCACZ, Makata, Ndirande, 12.10.2006.

¹¹⁸ Int. *Mlevi* T.E.W. Kayenda, Zion ya Bata (2), Salima, 29.7.2007.

wearisome experience of praying the entire night and the spiritual elation once the desert has been wandered through.

These descriptions also point to the importance given to communal prayer. “The analogy of drawing in breath and expelling it, but on a congregational scale, comes very close to how Zionists regard their activities.”¹¹⁹ Prayer, then, is the spiritual exhaling of the church. It is a time when the believers feel, reassured by Zion’s admission rules, that they ‘can let it all out.’ Some prayer sessions are so strainous that a group effort is demanded, comparable to team sport, if anything is to be achieved in the physical as well as in the spiritual realm. There is a palpable seriousness in the prayers offered, reaching up to a point when their intercession becomes so laboured that it can be seen as a sacrifice that willingly places itself on the altar.

As recorded in the previous chapter, any healing is in the end ascribed to answered prayer. Healing is the echo, the culmination, the redeeming and the vindication of intercession. Confession triggers those powers of prayer. Illness which has been caused by sin, and there are many in Zion’s universe, must be tackled first of all by confession. Such confessions had their forerunners in the Christian traditions as well as in primal African religions. Among the Zulu, ritual killings sought to restore relations with the shades, the ancestors. Part of the ritual was a detailed account of what had gone wrong, including wrong attitudes such as jealousy and hate. This kind of confessing would halt anger, which otherwise could develop into *ubuthakathi*, evil, associated with witchcraft.¹²⁰ This element was carried into Zionist churches among the Zulu, e.g. with the African Gospel Church.¹²¹ Confession takes place as a ritual cleansing among some *machona* Pentecostal churches in Malawi. As described, in many cases only a confession to the prophet will enable the believer to gain

¹¹⁹ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990 p. 83.

¹²⁰ Axel-Ivar Berglund, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989, p. 231.

¹²¹ Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 65.

access to a Zionist meeting. Similar restrictions to Zionist meetings were witnessed in Zimbabwe¹²² and Kwa Zulu Natal.¹²³ Members of the Chirimba Apostolic Church in Zion are required to confess the sins of the past week in every Sunday service. Such a custom has contributed to many of them leaving the church or starting a new one where requirements are less shaming.¹²⁴

As much as praying is an ‘inner work,’ it must be symbolically declared on the outside.¹²⁵ In the Zion Church (30), they fly flags above the meeting place for at least 24 hours prior to the service. They believe that this sets the ground apart for worship, “*the flags prepare the place.*”¹²⁶ When the meeting starts, the believers take their shoes off and, if the service takes place in a building, they make sure that all windows are closed. Everything external, ‘the world,’ is thus kept outside. When it comes to preaching, all hatches are again opened, since the world must hear the Good News. Yet healing is a work of prayer and therefore, at the end of the meeting, the windows are closed one more time. The prophets have taken over, confessions can be heard again, the Zionists pray fervently and prefer to be among themselves.¹²⁷ Moreover, the believers do not sit while praying. Such a position is seen as disrespect to God, paralleling situations in society where one does not greet an elder while seated.¹²⁸

Last but not least, one cannot underestimate the social bond which prayer creates. If a class has, say, fifty members who meet twice a week for worship and once a week the ladies have their own assembly, then the

¹²² Marthinus L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol. 2, The Hague: Mouton, 1974, p. 300.

¹²³ James Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990 p. 21.

¹²⁴ John Nindi, Chirimba Christian Apostolic Church in Zion, Its Establishment, Organization and Beliefs, Zomba: Kachere, 2006, p. 7.

¹²⁵ Lucy S. Banda, *The Masowe and Maranke Apostles in Malawi: Dynamics of the Entry, Growth, Development and Impact, 1950-2002*, MA, Zomba: University of Malawi, 2003, p. 34.

¹²⁶ Int. General Overseer Thomas Mlangeni, Ndirande, 12.8.2007.

¹²⁷ David Chidester, *Religions of South Africa*, London: Routledge, 1992, pp. 139-141.

¹²⁸ Cephas N. Omenyo, “Essential Aspects of African Ecclesiology: The Case of the African Independent Churches”, *Pneuma*, Cleveland: Society for Pentecostal Studies, vol. 22, no. 2, 2000, p. 242.

members in such a comparatively small group will get to know each other rather well. Add the element of prayer and confession, and the knowledge about one another goes very deep indeed. Praying with each other and for one another demands trust. Prayer is the agent and the outcome of this trust.

6. The Bible in Zion

“We present you with this Book,
the most valuable thing this world affords.
Here is wisdom. This is the Royal Law.
These are the lively oracles of God.”¹²⁹

Like many AICs, Malawian Zionism was made possible and has been spurred onwards through an available Bible translation. The Bible arrived in Malawi in the same year as the Zionists – in 1922. The early Protestant version *Buku Lopatulika* became available then and has served them as *their* Chinyanja Bible translation, up to this day. The New Testament was published in 1886 and the entire Bible in 1922.¹³⁰ The Word of God in their mother tongue comprises a direct approach to the faith, independent of foreign missionaries and a foreign church apparatus. The translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular let loose the powers of the Gospel, sparked creative forces modelling an African form of Christianity, free from the rigid structures of late Victorian missionary agencies.¹³¹ The absence of a custodian meant that the Bible helped them to come of age. At the same time the Scriptures provide for common features among AICs, for example the purification ceremony for young

¹²⁹ Words spoken by the Archbishop of Canterbury upon handing a Bible to the British monarch during the coronation ceremony.

<http://cursoryglance.wordpress.com/2008/01/14>.

¹³⁰ Ernst R. Wendland, *Buku Loyera. An Introduction to the New Chichewa Bible Translation*, Zomba: CLAIM-Kachere, 1998, p. 21.

¹³¹ Allan Anderson, Samuel Otwang, *Tumelo. The Faith of African Pentecostals in South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA, 1993, p. 29. Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 145.

mothers, which is hardly found in Europe and North America, has been introduced across the board on this continent.

The Scriptures both provide flexibility and sanctions to the Zionists. The last example, the purification ceremony, shows how anything can enter their religious repertoire and rituals, as long as it is mentioned in the Bible. No tradition tells them that '*This is no longer valid today,*' or '*God does not work like this any longer.*' In this vein John Mbiti argues for African Christians to have taken the Bible seriously "*as they heard it.*"¹³² In general, the Zionists try to have it all. They practise the Lord's Supper and they wash each others' feet. Every now and then we see a Menorah and dresses fashioned from Old Testament guidelines. Their mode of baptism is certainly from the New Testament, but their ritual washings, which I will describe later, stem from the older covenant. All musical instruments, which are mentioned in the Bible, can be heard in their services. The believers try to get as much life-style out of the Old Testament as possible. Malawian Zionists not only abide by the Bible, they try to remodel the world of the Bible. The Book serves as a blue print for a traditioned Zionist culture, which will be explained in this and the following chapter.

To start with, the general outlook on life is already similar between the Hebrews of old and the people of Africa.¹³³ The superiority of the heavenly realm is acknowledged, but also the interplay between heaven and earth.¹³⁴ Rain is tremendously important to both. The Bantu speaking people in eastern Africa are monotheists by tradition, something they have in common with the Israelites. Some theologians suggest that these parallels stem from an early contact between Israel and Africans. It is certainly true that Africa was in contact with the Hebrews through trade and other channels. Especially Ethiopia has to be mentioned in this

¹³² John Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*, Oxford: University Press, 1986, p. 258.

¹³³ Ulf Strohhahn, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, Blantyre: International Bible College Berea, 2000, p. 5.

¹³⁴ See Donald Fraser on parallels between the Tumbuka and Semitic worldview. *Winning a Primitive People*, London: Seeley, Service and Co., 1914, p. 130.

context.¹³⁵ However, evidence can not be produced where and when Hebrew thought fertilized the African traditional mind. Zionists, however, try to relive it all - in rural Malawi. Nearby streams are all called *Jordan*. Their villages, if only enough of the population are Zionists, are given Biblical names. A scene of them worshipping in their long robes can indeed suggest to have been transported back to Old Testament times. It is not only their adherence to many laws, but also the naming of their leaders and other functions. For instance in the New Zion Church (15), August is called the *month of harvest*.¹³⁶ This does not fit, since the most important crops in Malawi, maize and tobacco, are both harvested in March/April. August, however, is the month of harvest in the Jewish calendar.

All rediscoveries and innovations are counterbalanced by the Scripture's sanctioning functions. The Bible is *norma normans* to the Zionists. Kiernan understands the Bible to "constitute" the South African Zionists' meetings, calling them back to reason when things have gone over the top.¹³⁷ The Bible is *the* authority in Zion and has the final say. Some Ethiopian churches of South Africa, which have a strong element of political and racial dissent, went so far to regard the New Testament as the white man's fiction, which should be cut out of the Bible.¹³⁸ Malawi's Zionists would never dream of touching the Bible. The Book is referred to when prophets and other leaders are challenged or quarrel with each other. That the Zionists are more or less Bible-abiding people is seen by them resorting to the Book whenever big decisions were to be made, for example the drumming issue in the 1930s. Their hermeneutics are not that developed, so the simple mentioning of drumming did do. More complex issues, such as the key concern over biomedical medicine, demand a skilled approach in exegesis, something hardly any Zionist in the country has been trained to do. (I found out that doctrines, which are

¹³⁵ Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa*, London: SPCK, 1995, p. 49.

¹³⁶ Int. Bishop P.E. Makoko, Kaluzi, 28.2.2006.

¹³⁷ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990 p. 137.

¹³⁸ William C. Willoughby, *The Soul of the Bantu*, Westport: Negro Universities Press, 1970, p. 122.

not identifiable by name in the Bible, are not so much stressed in spirit churches, and this includes the Pentecostals, too. For example “trinity” or “the freedom of God” is hardly ever preached in these churches. It is easier for them to find their topics if they are explicitly mentioned by name in the Bible, e. g. the meaning of baptism.) Among Malawi’s Zionists, there is no mentioning of systematic theology. Dogmas about the trinity, transubstantiation or predestination are not developed. Such issues are certainly discussed, but not written down. Apart from the Bible, no theological literature has found entrance into Zion.

During healing prayers, a sister takes hold of a Bible, expressing her faith that the Word of God will protect her from witchcraft assaults. CCACZ in Zomba, 10th October 2009.



At least the leaders are ardent Bible readers. It is astonishing how they can pick from memory hundreds of verses and fully quote them with chapter and verse. Emphasis, however, is not laid on daily Bible reading, but on daily Bible living. Zionists want to live their faith, not theorize about it.¹³⁹ Devotional moments come mostly in corporate worship, especially during *seji* dancing. In 2009, still 51% of Malawian women were not able to read and write, and there is no reason to expect a better figure for female Zionist worshippers.¹⁴⁰ Corporate devotion rises in spiritual significance when worshippers are illiterate.

Spiritual life springs from the Bible. Freedom from vices happens through the Word that is being preached to the unbelievers. Abiding by Zion's tenets happens through constant Bible teaching and exhortation. *"In this way, independent churches bring to their adherents a feeling of liberation which owes its origin directly to the gospel message."*¹⁴¹

The CCACZ holds to the verbal and infallible inspiration of the Bible. "When the Bible speaks of 'all Scripture' being given by inspiration, it includes not only the thoughts but also the very words of Scripture."¹⁴² This is, of course, in line with their founder, Dowie, most evangelical and all Pentecostal churches in the world. Malawi's Zionists do not fall short of upholding the verbal inspiration of the Buku Lopatulika version. Newer Bible translations have been rejected as "tales" and the Buku Loyera has been branded as "a novel." Wacker said about the early Pentecostals' use of Scripture verses, "Most were couched into King James English, which bore the effect if not the intent of heightened solemnity."¹⁴³ It is this same attitude which will cement the Buku Lopatulika still for a long time in Zion.

¹³⁹ Matthew Engelke, *A Problem of Presence. Beyond Scripture in an African Church*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007, p. 87.

¹⁴⁰ <http://www.nso.malawi.net/>. 20.10.2009.

¹⁴¹ Joseph C. Chakanza, "Towards an Interpretation of Independent Churches in Malawi", *Africa Theological Journal*, n.d., vol. 11, 1982, p. 138.

¹⁴² Christian Catholic Church, *This We Believe*, Durban: The Christian Catholic Church in Zion of Africa, PO Box 3390, Durban 4000, 1993, p. 11.

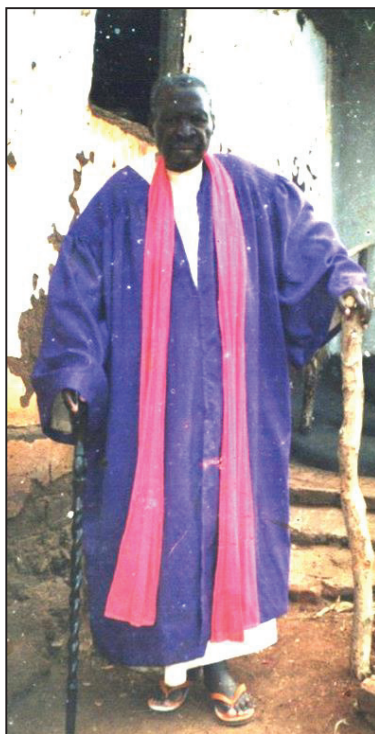
¹⁴³ Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003, p. 82.

Many days have gone since Robert Laws said to the Ngoni that by obeying 'the Book' and giving up war and plunder, they would become richer and greater. The spiritual meaning of those words was lost to the Ngoni.¹⁴⁴ The Zionists, however, have interpreted the Bible not only spiritually, but practically and physically. We have then a form of Christianity trying to restore an actual setting and culture, which is described as an ideal in the Pentateuch. The following section will show that they at least partially succeeded in its realization.

7. Settlements

"Zion is the Kingdom of God."¹⁴⁵

Enosi Numeri Ng'ombe's (1928-2001, pictured) bishop of the Zion ya Bata church (2) outstanding contribution is to have helped Zion to adhere closely to the original ideal, at the same time he translated Zionist traits into Malawian culture and successfully made them work here. He was born into Zion; his uncle was Simon Mlungamanja, founder of the church. Ng'ombe had seen visions since his youth and repeatedly heard a voice speaking to him, *"I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you."* He concluded from this that his task



¹⁴⁴ Walter A. Elmslie, *Among the Wild Ngoni*, London: Frank Cass, 1970, p. 120.

¹⁴⁵ Certificate as Umkhokheli, given to Jenette Nkosi, The Christian Apostolic Church in Zion of South Africa, 1965, in: Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 171.

was to create a Zion settlement where all believers would live together. Plan was put into action in 1975 when Ng'ombe purchased a huge plot at the foot of Kapili hill, 10 km outside of Salima, on the southern side of the road to Blantyre. Especially Ng'ombe's healing ministry drew people to come to *Mount Zion*, as it was henceforth called. I found 500 families resident there during my first visit in 2003. The bishop serves both as spiritual leader and as local chief over the village. Each family lives in their own house, like in any other village in Malawi, yet the life-style in Zion is communal. All residents are required to gather for devotions every morning at four o'clock and again at four o'clock in the afternoon. 2000 Zionists then fill the hall, which is 44 meters long and 22 meters wide. Inside, a huge altar, made of bricks and cement, governs the front. (The former church building close by had become too small and has been completely demolished. Yet its altar is left untouched.) They greet each other with "*Umkhuthula*," which is a remnant of the Zulu days and Ngoni dominance, meaning "peace." The common Chichewa greeting "*Muli bwanji?*" ("How are you?") is seldom heard. Instead, they ask, "*Mwasungidwa bwanji?*" ("How have you been kept?"). The answer usually is, "*Ndasungidwa bwino!*" ("I have been kept well!"). This is a very pious greeting, pointing to the One who keeps them well. Another remarkable and distinguishing feature is that they still address each other in Ngoni fashion by their clan name.¹⁴⁶ The days of Ngoni majorities in this Zion church seem to be gone, though. I found that the village attracts people from Yao, Chewa, Tumbuka and Sena tribes. Residents come from as far as Mozambique to settle there. The village has its own tinsmiths, carpenters, bicycle, radio and watch mechanics, grocery sellers, and stone-crushers, and they have recruited their own security guards to safeguard it from intruders. Their own cemetery is situated inside the settlement.

However, Mount Zion is not detached from the wider community. They barter with fishermen from the Lakeshore and do business at Salima market. The church also helped the local Kapili F.P. School to erect a new

¹⁴⁶ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 116.

building by making a huge donation in bricks. A cigarette kiosk or beer tavern cannot, of course, be found in the village. Anybody messing with traditional African medicines or displaying polygamist tendencies is asked to leave the settlement.

The “bata” (“calm, silence”) as their name says, is palpable in the day to day village life and continues in their services. They do not use any musical instruments. Clapping can hardly ever be heard and if so, then with cupped hands to muffle the sound. They do not dance, something that defines Zionists of other denominations; at most they sway a little to the rhythm. These Zionists wear plain white robes, not the usual star and cross ornamentation of other Malawian Zionists. The bishops are clad in black robes. Beards and barefooted worship are obligatory with other Zionists, but not at Mount Zion. Preaching is done in Zionist fashion, meaning that there is a preference for OT texts and that the speaker will have a reader who is quoting dozens of Bible verses during the homily. Those pricked in their hearts shout “Yesu Kristu,” “Aleluya,” “Amen” or “Eliya, Eliya.” This last reference is hard to explain, but my two educated guesses are that they either refer to Christ’s last words on the cross, when he cried out ‘Eli, Eli...;’ or they refer to J.A. Dowie, who called himself “Elijah the Restorer.”¹⁴⁷

Another rarity with the Zion ya bata is that women are allowed to preach and address the entire congregation. I listened to one of their preachers, Mayi Tsukatsuka, who, apparently under the inspiration of the Spirit, spoke in three languages. They were Chinyanja, which is the vernacular at Mount Zion; Chiyao, which, they told me, is her mother tongue and then she spoke in tongues. Her sermon was an interpretation of the Bible verses, which the reader shouted out and an interpretation of unknown tongues, which she herself uttered. This was unusual, for speaking in tongues belongs to the classic Pentecostal camp, and hardly any Zionist denomination in the country is open for it. Any speaker will introduce his words by saying, “*Ulemu kumwamba, ulemu ku gome, ulemu kwa agogo athu amene anatisiya.*” “Honour to the heaven,”

¹⁴⁷ Stanley M. Burgess, Eduard M. van der Maas, eds., *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002, p. 587.

meaning the Lord God, “Honour to the pulpit,” meaning the current local leaders and “Honour to our grandfather who has left us,” meaning the founder who passed away. Correspondingly, four pictures can be found near the front. One is an image of Jesus, rather European in fashion with blond curly hair. Then there is a picture of J.A. Dowie, another one depicting J.W.N. Dingiswayo and finally E.N. Ng’ombe. The mentioned grandfather who left them is Ng’ombe, who passed away in 2001, greatly mourned by Zion. This constant reference to him is but one sign of how much they still esteem him. His wife Agnes Ng’ombe received us several times in her lofty house in the village, but she passed away, too, on the 25th February 2006 and is buried beside her husband. Their mausoleum is but six feet away from the main church building. She was greatly honoured, too, and commonly referred to as “Mayi Mkuru.” While alive, the Great Mother took her place in the church in a boxed pew set aside for her, not distantly reminding me of such privileged seats in old Lutheran churches in Germany. She had no office apart from being the founder’s widow, but this implied for her to be consulted and asked on all major decisions by the bishops and inspectors.

Ng’ombe founded the settlement in good Zionist tradition. A Christian El Dorado must be the dream of any exilic religion, be it down on earth or more celestial in nature. Dowie had a vision of a city free from vices and realized it in part in Zion, Illinois. Later in Africa, Le Roux wanted to have his own Zion colony, although this never materialized.¹⁴⁸ Other Zionists were more successful in South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe; the best known are called ‘*Moriah*.’ Malawian members of the ZCC (8) are expected to pilgrimage to South Africa to see the wonder of their headquarters in person.¹⁴⁹ In Malawi, many rural Zions consist of nothing more than a few houses, one in which the bishop resides. Apart from the Mlonda Mission, Ine wa Yehovah ndi Mikaeli, at Chintheche, a church, which is not Zionist in origin but displays some Zionist traits, no other

¹⁴⁸ Bengt Sundkler, *Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists*, London: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 27.

¹⁴⁹ Minister Chilowa Banda, ZCC, *sermon*, Majiga, Ndirande, Blantyre, 9.7.2006.

denomination but Ng'ombe's Zion ya Bata has established itself with a permanent settlement of this size and organization.

John Lofland and James Richardson have assessed how religious groups organize themselves socially.¹⁵⁰ They drafted the following ascending classification: *clinic, congregation, collective, corps* and *colony*. Most Zionists in Malawi can be put under 'collective.' They congregate, yet their corporateness involves more than the meetings. They share money and material in times of need, give emotional support; prefer each other as business partners and strive to marry within their own group. However, most Zionists do not live with each other. The Zion ya bata has reached an unprecedented level of corporateness within Malawian Zionism. The Zion settlement near Salima is indeed a type of *colony*.¹⁵¹

The name 'Zionists' evokes assimilations with the Old Testament. Of course, in dictionaries and on the internet, 'Zionism' is first of all referred to as the political movement of modern Jews that reached its aim when they resettled in Israel and proclaimed their own state in 1948. Linked to this are the "Christian Zionists," staunch supporters of Israel's nationhood, surpassed only by their zeal to evangelize the Jews of Israel.¹⁵²

Yet the very name 'Zion' is a much older *idea*. It is a programme, a vision, an utopian dream, which filled the hearts with similar longings way back in Babylon, in the Warsaw ghetto, in the mines of Johannesburg and at Chimutu village in Malawi, too. There is, as such, no link between our Zionists here in Malawi and Jewish Zionism. (An exception to this rule could be the appearance of a rather mysterious letter "from Israel" to the Chirimba Apostolic Church in Zion (1), which asked them to stop

¹⁵⁰ John Lofland, James Richardson, "Religious Movement Organisations: Elementary Forms and Dynamics", in Louis Kriesberg, ed., *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, Greenwich: JAI Press, 1990, pp. 29ff.

¹⁵¹ Jared Diamond uses the term *commune* in a similar fashion. *The World until Yesterday*, London: Penguin, 2012, pp. 362f.

¹⁵² David Brog, *Standing with Israel, Why Christians Support the Jewish State*, n.d., Frontline Publications, 2006.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Zionism/christianzionism.html>. 11.11.2009.

worshiping on Sundays and become Sabbath worshippers instead.)¹⁵³ Yet, there is a *spiritual link* because Jewish Zionism and our Zionism started with the same ideal, which is finding a homestead for “my people” here on earth. The Old Testament acclamation “Let my people go,” resounded millions of times in America’s cotton rows. It also rang a bell with those Africans who suffered under colonialism and later under dictators from their midst. Another Old Testament attitude is some prophets’ implicit dislike toward the city, its urban depravity and municipal misconduct. Statements can be found in Hosea 11, 6 and in Micah’s oracles.¹⁵⁴ This anti-urban stand is something Malawian Zionists sympathize with; urbanity is almost equalized with iniquity.¹⁵⁵ Cities are spaces void of the tradition-preserving social control, which is still very much in power in rural Malawi. Urbanites are surrounded everywhere by man-made constructions, sheltered from the forces of (God’s) nature, living in a self-created world, where immorality runs rampant.¹⁵⁶ The *machona* had indeed had enough of city and compound dwelling. Therefore, the wish and actual realization of a Zion settlement is yet the strongest expression of their salvation theology. The colony at Salima is an architectural and social embodiment of the moral difference, which these Zionists want to make. At the heart of it is the enormous altar. It pegs the spiritual field, for Ng’ombe’s healing ministry, the preaching and the Lord’s Supper took place here. Such “*innovations in space*” can become “*a claim, a proximity to God that can be seen.*”¹⁵⁷ Their ethical rules cause them to climb a higher rung on the ladder, distancing them from society. They are not simply quiet purists, but separatists, to be classed into one group with

¹⁵³ John Nindi, *Chirimba Christian Apostolic Church in Zion, Its Establishment, Organization and Beliefs*, Zomba: Kachere, 2006, p. 7.

¹⁵⁴ D. Rosner, „The Balance of Economic Security and Income According to the Mosaic Law (The Torah),“ in: K. Nürnberg, ed., *Affluence Poverty and the Word of God*, Mapalamulo: The Lutheran Publishing House, 1978, p. 142.

¹⁵⁵ Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 18.

¹⁵⁶ Inger Furseth, Pål Repstad, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion*, Aldershot: Ashgate, p. 86, 2007.

¹⁵⁷ Matthew Engelke, *A Problem of Presence. Beyond Scripture in an African Church*, Berkeley: University of California, 2007, p. 136.

certain Mennonites and, in particular, the Amish.¹⁵⁸ Separation serves to preserve ritual purity. They try to avoid the company of unbelievers as much as possible. They “*frown on*” the cultivation of external links to ‘the world.’¹⁵⁹ Certain things can only be done within these semi-open societies. For example, Ng’ombe’s double role as bishop of the church and chief over the village helped them to ward off dangers from the outside. As chief, he was able to avoid any interference from traditional religious rites, which come with any local chieftainship in Malawi. He was also able, as told in chapter 4, to hold his ground when government officials assaulted the village with their vaccination campaign. However, Malawi has a different political background and a settlement like this, contrary to South Africa and Zimbabwe, cannot be seen as a proud resistance to white rule. After all, Ng’ombe founded his settlement ten years after independence.¹⁶⁰

In summary, it can be said that Zion ya bata (2) near Salima are the Malawian children of Israel who have settled in the Promised Land. Malawian Zionism has many varieties, but their calm worship and prohibition of drumming make this church stand out among its peers. It is not so much a question of volume in worship, but that the prominence and time, which is usually given to dancing and drumming, have no role to play at Mount Zion. Their calm mode of worship and fancy-free apparel put them more into the evangelical camp; their openness for the gifts of the Holy Spirit has Pentecostal traits. Dowie’s Zion movement in the United States of America is not the same today as it was in the beginning. The charismatic founders are long gone, tempers have cooled down, prophetic voices are seen in general perspective and some extreme doctrinal statements have been altered to fit into the evangelical mainstream, as mentioned for example under healings.¹⁶¹ The church in

¹⁵⁸ Egon Larsen, *Strange Cults and Sects: A Study of their Origin and Influence*, New York: Hart Publishing Company, 1971, n. d.

¹⁵⁹ James Kiernan, “African Independent Churches and Modernity”, in: Dawid Venter, ed., *Engaging Modernity*, Westport: Praeger, 2004, p. 55.

¹⁶⁰ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Zionism and Faith Healing in Rhodesia*, Leiden: Afrika-Studiecentrum, 1970, p. 31.

¹⁶¹ <http://www.ccczion.org/purposeandvision/purposeandvision.htm>. 23.1.2010.

the USA changed its name in 1997 into *Christ Community Church*. Zionism in Malawi has moved on, too. Yet the Zion ya Bata with its headquarters near Salima, is still the closest heir to the original Zion ideal. Moreover, I claim that this form of Malawian Zionism is truer to its legacy, with all the positives and negatives implied, than the contemporary Zion movement in the USA.

8. Ordinances and Symbols

...these churches [AICs] have been in the forefront of contextualization of Christianity in Africa for over a century.¹⁶²

We move from an outer expression of salvation, settlements, to a more personal and ecclesiastic level. Some Zionist denominations have a sacramental understanding; others see baptism and the Lord' Supper as symbolic acts. Therefore, the word *ordinance* is used, not sacrament. The quotation above rings true in this particular context. Religious creativity abounds in this section. Malawi's Zionists have contextualized these ordinances and taken and developed rites from the Bible, which are not practised in western Christianity.

a. Baptism

Africa is a continent full of sacred pools and rivers. Ritual bathings are well-known in traditional religions. Waters in remote forests are known to be inhabited by spirits.¹⁶³ This background alone must have attracted the first African Christians to be baptized by immersion. Immersion, *ipso facto* speaks of a more radical and holistic change of one's life, if compared to sprinkling. Many African cultures revere flowing water over and against standing water, which to them is 'dead' and 'dirty'.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, Cambridge: University Press, 2004, p. 104.

¹⁶³ Harry West, ed., "Working the Borders to Beneficial Effect", in: *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 40.

¹⁶⁴ Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 75.

Among the Ngoni, babies were bathed and ritually cleansed ten to fourteen days after the birth. Then the new family member was for the first time shown in public.¹⁶⁵ Ngoni society knew of sacred bathing at the beginning of puberty. A boy had to wash himself in a cold river after the first nocturnal emission. Girls had to do the same after menstruating for the first time. These rites speak more of toughening than ritual cleansing. The onlookers, always of the same sex, stood by to see if the candidate would shiver from the cold, which to them was a sign of softness.¹⁶⁶ The Zulu creation myth places the origin of man near the reeds. Reeds carry water and penetrate the earth. Likewise, a diviner is “born” in the water of the sacred pool; his exit is the precise beginning of the divination career.¹⁶⁷ Ritual washings are in order after a diviner has treated somebody with a spirit-inflicted illness. Even repeated washings are known in traditional Zulu divination practices, and one has not to look for long to find a parallel to the manifold washings which Malawian Zionists prescribe to their flock.¹⁶⁸

J.A. Dowie accepted a more or less Baptist theology on the issue and added the *triune* mode, as they call it. Therefore, the ordinance in Zion is a believer’s baptism which excludes all those too young to make a conscious and voluntary choice. “*We do not baptize children because they do not know sin,*” says Archbishop Magagula of the Christian Apostolic Zion Church in Zion (13).¹⁶⁹ It is by total immersion, three times, once for and on the count of every person in the Godhead. We witnessed a baptism of the CCACZ at Namadingo, in October 2009. There was a shout of protest from the audience advising the baptizer to immerse competently when one candidate had not been totally engulfed. Moreover, it must happen in a river, in flowing water. They like to imagine that the flowing stream takes the sins away, as I was told in the Holy

¹⁶⁵ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 136.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 146f.

¹⁶⁷ Axel-Ivar Berglund, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989, pp. 144, 147.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 223f.

¹⁶⁹ Int. Bishop Pearson Fasinesi Lipenga Magagula, Kunthawira, Chileka, 12.5.2005.

Apostolic Church in Zion (3).¹⁷⁰ Malawi's brooks and streamlets are oftentimes dammed to make the water deep enough.

Some South African Zionist groups have changed the threefold baptism into single, seven or even ninefold immersion, but that has usually not been adopted by the Malawians. Immersion is the mode of baptism with almost all Malawian Zionists. The exception is the Ifa-ifa Zion ya Bata Church (4) and its breakaway, the Zion ya Kang'oma (6). These denominations sprinkle infants because of their historical and doctrinal proximity to the Dutch Reformed Church. Most Zionist churches in Malawi baptize by triple immersion. This is a significant hallmark because Pentecostals (with the exception of the AFM) usually immerse only once and former Zionists who have entered mainstream Pentecostalism dropped their two additional dippings accordingly!

Another development is best illustrated by looking at the Apostolic Faith Church (7). It came out of the Apostolic Faith Mission in the 1940s, with its heritage of three-fold baptism handed down from John G. Lake. Herbert Kakhobwe, who led the Zionist break-away in 1948, retained the threefold immersion because he regarded it as a true Zionist tenet. The church has gone down in numbers in the Ntcheu area, but grew stronger under the leadership of Bishop Mataka in Machinga and Mangochi. A small band of believers still meets in Ntcheu, but most members of the Apostolic Faith Church are nowadays found among the Yao. Technically, the two groups are still one denomination. Yet, the followers of Mataka have abolished the threefold over single immersion. One reason for this is certainly the strong Trinitarian statement, which threefold immersion makes. It's better to leave that less pronounced in a predominantly Muslim area.¹⁷¹ The Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3) knows of one

¹⁷⁰ Int. with the leaders of the HACZ (3), Bishop F.B. Chaluluka, Mrs. Chaluluka, General Levi L.N. Nkhoma, L. Mbewe, A.F. Sagona Chisale, Whwayo, 14.6.2003.

¹⁷¹ Int. Justin Kachotsa (son of Mataka), L. Mahata, Mr Mtabwa, Mwalasi, Machinga, 5.3.2006.

exception to immersion: the bishop sprinkles the corpses of those who had repented but were not yet baptized.¹⁷²

b. A Baptismal Service

We are guests at a CCACZ class on Saturday, the 26th of September 2009 at Maonga village, Thyolo. The baptism service starts at 10 o'clock in the morning. *Mlevi* Harrison Kanada is the minister in charge of the baptism, with *Mlevi* Mangalusa as organizing secretary assisting Kanada. Eleven people are going to be baptized in Namalanda River today. Helpers have built up a little dam for total immersion needs some depth. Candidates are between ten and seventy years of age, three women and eight men. The baptizer steps into the water first, holding a tall stick in his right hand. This serves as a gauge and helps him know how deep the water is. He pokes and eventually plunges the stick at the centre of the pool. Some Bible verses concerning baptism are read and shortly explained, then Kanada prays to ask the Lord to bless the pool and also to protect him from all dangerous and poisonous snakes and scorpions.

Admission is at this moment of crucial importance and the prophets are called to the task. In some churches, e.g. the ZCC (8), they only baptize those over whom they have prayed for a longer time.¹⁷³ Today the prophets have given instructions that a string (*nthambo* or *chigwa*) be placed on the ground as an entrance to the sacred pool. Every candidate is required to cross the string before reaching the baptizer, who is waiting in the water. This is a prophetic instruction for today, meaning that it does not happen at every baptism, but at the spur of inspiration. The string declares the space as sacred. People also believe that it protects the area from defilement and even snakes. Another string is used for all ladies wishing to be baptized. This is a moment of uttermost modesty, and so the cord around their legs will keep the skirt or dress from coming

¹⁷² Int. with the leaders of the HACZ, Bishop F.B. Chaluluka, Mrs. Chaluluka, General Levi L.N. Nkhoma, L. Mbewe, A.F. Sagona Chisale, Whwayo, 14.6.2003.

¹⁷³ Minister Chilowa Banda, ZCC, *sermon*, Majiga, Ndirande, Blantyre, 9.7.2006.

up in the pool. Yet we enquire about the meaning and learn that it has symbolic significance, too. The string around the legs indicates the resolve for sexual chastity.

Although prayers were uttered and even with the string employed, a small snake did appear at the pool in the form of a young black mamba during the baptisms. This left the people with divided minds and in



suspense. Some said it was the devil's agent planning to confuse the ceremony but others said it was just a natural snake and it had nothing to do with the baptism.

The baptizer pushes every candidate three times under the water. The picture shows Mayi Mary M. being immersed by *Mlevi* Kanada. She was born in 1939 and came to join the Zionists seventy years later.

The act of baptism is by itself dramatic, liminality at its best, only climaxed by two women starting to actually wrestle in the water with *Mlevi* Kanada. One of them is reported to have suffered from demons, which now try to hinder her to be baptized. The other lady is emotionally overwhelmed. She had seen a vision of a man in white linen during the

ceremony and her reaction is very physical. This is not uncommon. Many Zionists give testimony that they saw visions and claimed to have received the Holy Spirit while they were standing in the water and were baptized. Eventually both are baptized and they calm down afterwards. The symbolic and physical array of everything that has occurred here is overwhelming. Baptism itself speaks of life and death, and there are physical expressions of encounters with demons and angels in the pool.

c. The Meaning of Baptism

“...none of these rituals contains only one interpretation.”¹⁷⁴

Baptism is concurrent with membership in the churches. There is no prolonged catechumenate within Zion, although candidates need to give sufficient proof of having turned their backs on former sins. It happens that the catechumen is asked to bring his *katundu*, for example in the ZCC (8). These are items from their former lives, especially all devices pertaining to witchcraft and drugs. They are thrown into the baptismal pool and find their end there, too. Baptism is a watershed, the all important public confession to Christ and, at the same time, the certain declaration that one has become a Zionist. “...*you are the people who have been drawn from the water, separated from a group of people, extracted, so that you should know the will of God.*”¹⁷⁵ Only after baptism are ZCC (8) adherents allowed to wear the uniform and attach the star.¹⁷⁶

I have heard some westerners say that Africans are not burdened by their sins while converting to Christ. To those outside observers, African Christians seem to be having too good a time with a lack of contrition. However, a closer look will bring us to a different conclusion. The baptism

¹⁷⁴ Inger Furseth, Pål Repstad, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion*, Aldershot: Ashgate, p. 128, 2007.

¹⁷⁵ Minister Chilowa Banda, ZCC (8), sermon, Majiga, Ndirande, Blantyre, 9.7.2006.

¹⁷⁶ Allan Anderson, Samuel Otwang, *Tumelo. The Faith of African Pentecostals in South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA, 1993, p. 51.

experience in particular can be a horrifying experience. Many Malawians do not know how to swim, and it takes all their courage to enter a river and entrust their lives into the hands of a baptist. Included must be the frequent struggle with evil spirits during the baptism. For sure, many come to the faith out of an inner brokenness. *“We baptize people who have confessed their sins with a broken and contrite heart.”*¹⁷⁷

Some churches, such as the Chirimba Christian Apostolic Church in Zion (1) and the Zion Sabbath Kenani Church (20), give their members new names after baptism. Almost all of them are taken from the Bible; favourites being Yohane and Miriam. Biblical books also serve as names, which have appeared already in this study, e.g. Deuteronomy and Numeri. What else is in a name? In the Chipulumutso Church (29), members are discouraged to give their children negative names. Such is done in Malawi to ward off evil spirits, e.g. if a child is called “Dwalani,” (lit. “get sick!”) then the evil spirit is believed to loose interest in the child. At Chipulumutso, one cannot find babies or young children by the names of Mavuto, Masauko and Tazona.¹⁷⁸

In their own understanding, baptism alone will not save them, although it is certainly the most important ordinance in all churches. A preacher from Zion ya Bata (2) put it like this, *“The Spirit and fire will cleanse the sins of men, water alone cannot take sins away, peace be upon us.”*¹⁷⁹ Baptism in Zion is then, as Becken expressed it, an *“accompanying salvific act.”*¹⁸⁰ It belongs to salvation but by itself does not constitute it. Otherwise, if salvation be reduced to the simple act of baptism, they would certainly baptize infants. The requirements, however, are more.

¹⁷⁷ Int. Bishop M. Kawenga, Jordan Zion ya Bata (5), Dzoole, Dowa, 12.9.2009.

¹⁷⁸ Int. Bishop S.B. Kasuzo Phiri and Harry Patson Phiri, Dombale, 1.3.2006.

¹⁷⁹ Joseph Jimu, *sermon*, Zion ya Bata (2), Chidothe, Mlumbe, Zomba, 16.7.2006.

¹⁸⁰ *“...[Taufe] ist begleitendes Heilungshandeln.”* Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 86.

d. Ziwasheni – Ritual Washings

Ziwasheni - this compounded noun indicates its origin from English, with the plural *zi* prefix as an adoption from the Chinyanja. The word, like so many within Malawian Zionism, has come to us from South Africa, where it is known as *isiwasho* among the Zionists.¹⁸¹ It could have its origin in Hebrews 6:2, where it talks about the “washings” in the American Standard Bible. The Hebrews of the New Testament understood the Christian baptism within the wider frame of ritual washings, which the Jewish religion called for. Zionists understand washings as a repeatable Christian ritual – apart from the single event of baptism. Almost always 2.Kings 5:1ff is quoted on the occasion. Naaman, a captain in the Aramite army, suffered from leprosy. He is cured by obeying the Lord’s prophet,



Elisha, who had instructed him to immerse himself seven times in the Jordan. Thus, *ziwasheni* has been traditioned as a Zionist practice both because of its traditional background in Africa and the

Biblical record.

We witnessed several *ziwasheni* rituals. Here is the account from the CCACZ service at Namadingo.¹⁸² A baptismal service preceded the

¹⁸¹ Linda E. Thomas, *Under the Canopy*, Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1999, p. 87.

¹⁸² The church is one kilometre from Bimbi trading centre, near Lake Chirwa. The events took place on 10th October 2009.

ziwasheni and the same pool is used. As seen in the picture, this time a little gate has been erected to symbolically admit people to the sacred area. This is not a custom, but done through prophetic inspiration. More than ten people come forward and step into the water, one by one. A *mlevi* lays hands on the supplicant's head and prays an intercessory prayer. Then, one by one, they immerse themselves seven times in the water; no baptizer is needed. Contrary to baptism, the candidate ducks into the water face down.

Ziwasheni serves three purposes: it is believed to cleanse from cardinal sins; it is a prescription in certain cases of sickness and it is used to rid people of afflicting spirits. Regarding forgiveness, *ziwasheni* is not a regular repentance rite, but serves as a marker for crisis points. In the Apositoli Zion Church (16), remorseful backsliders have to undergo the procedure. This points to the uniqueness of baptism, which cannot be repeated, yet a similar ordinance is chosen to reinitiate the returnee. In the same church, *ziwasheni* is called for as an act of repentance when someone wants to bury an extramarital affair. Consequently, children born out of wedlock are immersed by *ziwasheni*, too. It is believed that the water washes away the 'contamination' of that sin through which they were conceived. This should not be confused with baptism – infants and children are not baptized unto salvation.

Prophets instruct people to immerse themselves in the pool as a medical cure. Again, this is understood as a strong measure against sickening forces; minor medical infirmities are not treated this way. Contrary to baptism, infants and children are immersed during *ziwasheni* when they are critically ill. This day at Namadingo, one-year old Andrea K. is brought by his mother. The boy has been sick for quite a while and it is hoped that this will bring an end to the malaria. Too young to immerse himself, the *mlevi* keeps him in his arms, covers the nose, and dips the boy seven times under the water. Another patient is Misheck J. He is too sick on this day to immerse himself, so the prophets make him drink the same water. If the water heals, it must be holy, and if it is holy, it will

certainly heal. He is hesitant, for some cows had already been to the pool, soiling the water. Eventually he gives in and drinks it.

Lastly, *ziwasheni* serves to exorcise demons. This day, Mayi Mercy C. has been advised to seek this cure for her problems. However, all of a sudden she goes into such a violent rage in the water that the bystanders quickly pull her out, lest she drowns. The leaders claim that demons are coming out of her, and that those evil spirits panic because of the power of the Holy Spirit. Another woman, Mayi C. shows similar symptoms of distress in the water. I do not know if the exorcism is completed. In the eyes of the leaders, the manifestation of these powers alone justifies the *ziwasheni* treatment. Similar exorcisms have been reported from Zimbabwean Zionists, where the '*shavi spirits*' leave through "*the force of the Holy Spirit in the water.*"¹⁸³ To conclude the ordinance, all involved kneel down at the edge of the pool and pray.

Other washings are practised among different Zionist groups in accordance with Old Testament law. A purification ceremony is held should a member of the Sinai Zion Church (21) touch the carcass of a mammal or bird. This again has parallels in Ngoni traditions, and many other traditional societies in Africa, where people had to shave, immerse themselves in rivers and burn any utensil that may have been employed in a funeral.¹⁸⁴

e. The Lord's Supper

We were able to participate in a communion service of the CCACZ at Namadingo, near Lake Chirwa. It was Saturday evening, 10th October 2009 when preparations began. Wheat flour, water, some cooking oil and red juice are brought to the house where the high ranking officials of the church are in conference. The ingredients are put into a plastic basin, which is covered with a clean white cloth. Two strings, red and green, are

¹⁸³ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Zionism and Faith Healing in Rhodesia*, Leiden: Afrika-Studiecentrum, 1970, p. 46.

¹⁸⁴ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 197.

tied around the basin, a white string is placed on top of it. All this is done through prophetic revelations, many of them coming from General *Mlevi* Thomson Lisimba on this particular evening. Most utterances, however, do not concern strings and colours, but reconciliation among the leaders. Communion being what the word says, this ceremony has a much stronger social dimension than other ordinances. Still in the house, prophecies help the officials to talk things through. A revelation calls for those who harbour grudges to make a public confession. Five different *alevi* speak up, one after another. Issues concern unfairness towards a domestic worker, for which forgiveness is asked. Another admits quarrelling with his wife over financial matters, followed by a third brother who confesses his worries because he does not have the money to travel back home after the meetings. Two issues concern them all. A *mlevi* complains that people are not eager to help with the practical matters of the meetings; another states that some classes are apparently not willing to travel and visit their fellow brothers. All this is mentioned, talked through and as they pray, they seek each others' forgiveness.

The leaders are ready by 10 pm. Their exit from the house turns into a triumphant procession. One *mlevi* blows the trumpet, marking the beginning of this Zionist parade. The people come and join the leaders; there is dancing, jubilation and ululations as they carry the elements to the church. It is as if the children of Israel were carrying the Ark of God, one observer remarked.

The Lord's Supper was conducted by Bishop Thameson Gomeza, assisted by General *Mlevi* Nyson Lisimba and *Mtumiki* Nsani. Introductory scriptures are read, which link this celebration to the Old Testament Passover; 2. Chronicles 30:1¹⁸⁵

Reader

"And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover unto the LORD God of Israel."

¹⁸⁵ Quoted from the King James Version.

Congregation to keep the
Passover unto the
Lord God of Israel.

Reader to keep the
Passover unto the
Lord God of Israel.

Congregation to keep the
Passover unto the
Lord God of Israel.

Reader “For the king had
taken counsel, and
his princes, and all
the congregation in
Jerusalem, to keep
the Passover in the
second month.”

Congregation to keep the
Passover in the second month.

Reader to keep the
Passover in the second month.

Congregation to keep the Passover in the second month.

This kind of reading goes on for a while. They have a
Menorah ready for use and Numbers 8:2ff is quoted on
the occasion:

Reader “Speak unto Aaron, and say unto him, When thou
lightest the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light over
against the candlestick.”

Congregation the seven lamps shall give light over against the
candlestick.



People can see how the altar is built; the elements are arranged while
Bible verses are read. The stage is set. The Menorah illuminates the
scene. They all prostrate in prayer after the ‘*Aleluya, amen*’ signal given
by the bishop. (It is a custom in Malawian Zionism to start worship with

the signal words, *‘Aleluya, Amen’*, in general spoken by the senior leader in the congregation.)

Bishop Gomeza reads from Luke 22:9, and again the congregation repeats many of the verses. Parts are enacted, for example when he reads, *“follow the man carrying a pitcher of water,”* one *mlevi* walks across the front with a jug and some believers spontaneously get up and follow him. No doubt, the people enjoy this, they experience for themselves the night that Jesus was betrayed.

Included in the Lord’s Supper, and here the Zionists take the Bible indeed literally, is the ritual washing of each others’ feet. The introductory words are read from John 13:4ff:

Reader	“He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.”
Congregation	and girded himself.
Reader	“After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.”
Congregation	and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

While these verses are read, the leaders wash each others’ feet, followed by all the members present. There are only three basins, so it all takes time. Nevertheless, the procedure is again accompanied by special songs that fit the occasion and so time passes much faster. This act of service and humility is all the more worthwhile because of their barefoot style of worship - dusty feet on dusty ground.

After this, other Scriptures take up the communion’s theme; John 6:55ff and Matthew 26:26ff are read. Before partaking of the Lord’s Supper, the preacher delivers a stern warning to those who want to eat the bread and drink the wine in an unworthy manner. Such people would be sinning against the body and blood of the Lord; 1.Corinthians 11:27 is quoted for this. All high ranking leaders join hands to serve the people in

their places, offering bread and wine. It takes a while for everybody to be served. Meanwhile, the congregation sings different choruses: “*Sambani, dziyeretseni, chotsani machitidwe anu oipa.*” (*Wash, clean yourself, get rid of your evil deeds*); “*Unakhetsedwa mwazi do wa Yesu Mfumuyo*” (*The blood of Christ the King was shed*)¹⁸⁶ and “*Kuli dziko labwino kumwamba*” (*Heaven is a beautiful place*). Another warning is given to those who are not Zionists but would like to partake of the Lord’s Supper. Exodus 12:43 is quoted and interpreted this way, “*And the LORD said unto Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the Passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof.*” Others who have not undergone *ziwasheni* and have not yet confessed their sins are cautioned, too. 1. Cor. 11,28-31 is read, and the congregation fittingly hums the song “*Woipa wonga Yudasi asadye M’gonerowo*” (*A wicked man like Judas is not to take the Lord’s Supper*).

Finally everybody kneels down, thanking the Lord for the blessed service. The benediction is given by General *Mlevi Nyson Lisimba*. The service comes to an end at 5 o’clock on Sunday morning.

More variety can be found as we look at the celebration of the Lord’s Supper across the Zionist denominations. The Chipiliro Zion Church (12) observes the Lord’s Supper twice a year. In some denominations, communion is only taken at night. The ordinance takes place as part of an overnight vigil and many hours are spent in prayer and spiritual preparation.¹⁸⁷ Many churches in the Ntcheu area prepare the elements themselves. The wine is self-made from the *mpesa* (wine) shrub, which grows wild in the area. It is, however, not very fermented. The Apositoli Zion Church (16) views the colour red to be very important in the elements. They mix boiled guava fruit with the juice to obtain this result. A similar outcome is accomplished by mixing water with *Robertson’s Red Food Colouring*, something the Entopia Zion Church (28) believes in. All Zionist refuse wine with alcohol, this differentiates them from some Pentecostals.¹⁸⁸ There is no baking powder used when baking the bread,

¹⁸⁶ The Chinyanja expression “do” is onomatopoetic, resembling the sound a drop makes.

¹⁸⁷ Int. Bishop W. Ngodzo, Mazonda village., 11.1.2005.

¹⁸⁸ Bengt Sundkler, *Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists*, London: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 50.

as the Samaria Zion Church (25) emphasizes.¹⁸⁹ The New Zion Church (15) celebrates the Lord's Supper three times a year. This commemoration is solemnized in that every person involved in the making of bread and wine is not supposed to have sexual relations with his or her spouse; they have to refrain from it for three days prior to and for three days after the ordinance. Any violation of this will be detected by prophets or prophetesses.¹⁹⁰ As described, the leaders serve the elements to the congregation. However, we have also witnessed that the believers come forward, to the altar, and receive bread and wine there.

f. Symbols

“Pneumatology in Africa
is enacted at least as much as it is articulated.”¹⁹¹

Zionism is rich with symbols. With symbols are meant all objects, acts, events and relations among the Zionists, which, according to Geertz, “*serve as a vehicle for conception*” and “*the conception is the symbol's meaning*.”¹⁹² They are *not*, to the Zionists, a kind of neo-Kantian mental machinery, representing a reality which can in the last resort only be found in their consciousness - for symbols serve to make the spiritual field more real, not to create distance from it.

I have already mentioned the symbolic meaning of things that represent, for example, their apparel in chapter 4. Starting with the simple white robes, which most denominations wear, Zion's symbols are a wishful expression of a desired spiritual and social status, aiming to pervade all aspect of their lives. There are, however, also symbols which not only represent, but act upon the minds and bodies of the participants

¹⁸⁹ Int. General Mlevi Chawango, Manjawira, 23.1.2004.

¹⁹⁰ Int. Bishop P.E. Makoko, Kaluzi, 28.2.2006.

¹⁹¹ Allan Anderson, Samuel Otwang, *Tumelo. The Faith of African Pentecostals in South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA, 1993, p. 118.

¹⁹² Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, London: Hutchinson, 1975, p. 91.

and bystanders. In this sense, the section about ordinances exemplifies what has been said about the use of the Bible: Zionists try to enact as much Bible ‘reality’ as possible. They are staging Biblical events. Most symbols serve in and under this presupposition. They are employed as props in the drama, for example the strings used during baptism and the Menorah at the Lord’s Supper. Like most symbols, they have more than one meaning. The string around the ladies’ legs stands for chastity both symbolically and practically, as it keeps the dress from coming loose. The Menorah’s shine transports the participants right back into an Old Testament scene, yet its light helps to distribute the elements during the night worship.

Two forces are working on symbols in Zionism. On one hand, the spirit church character of the churches will forbid a blatant sacramentalism. Once in the spiritual field, the worshippers have their eyes closed and are ignorant to anything material. With their heads in the clouds, absorbed in the Spirit, whatever has been used to mark the field or to bring them there is now of secondary importance. Outsiders and researchers, who do not consider this deeper spirit-church character of the Zionists, have often been puzzled by what they assumed to be a magical belief in colours, potions and ritual dances.¹⁹³ Nay, the believers can afford all the ornamentalism, since they do *not* believe in its enchantment. One can hear Zionist preachers snigger at any outward form of religiosity and the “*empty encrustation*” of rites.¹⁹⁴

On the other hand, the spirit church character provides space to move in religious innovation. The prophets are the driving force in this department; creativity is their business. Zionists not only employ more ordinances than other churches, e.g. washing each others’ feet or the purification ceremony for mother and child, they also build this repertoire up all the time. More symbols are added; new spiritual enactments are being invented. In the ZCC (8) in Ndirande, Blantyre, the members drink a glass of milk at the end of their meeting. This, so they say, they have

¹⁹³ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol. 2, The Hague: Mouton, 1974, p. 233.

¹⁹⁴ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, London: Routledge, 2002, p. 193.

received from the Holy Spirit. In their understanding, angels are connected to the colour white. *“Each one of us is going to drink one cup, these are our healings so that when we go to bed at night we will be dreaming about angels, peace upon Zionists.”*¹⁹⁵ Milk as a sacrament that induces angelic dreams? The symbolic tenet in their theology comes out all the stronger, for no Zionist would actually believe that milk transubstantiates into angels. The CCACZ church at Namadingo received in October 2010 a revelation, by the spur of prophetic inspiration, to pour out some flour. Again, this illustrates how prophetic activity can bring about new religious rituals. However, are they that novel? For the affinity is undeniable, both Biblical ordinances and traditional African religions know of flour pouring.¹⁹⁶

Quite a number of Zionist leaders answered that apart from the Lord’s Supper and baptism, disciplinary action is also seen as a sacrament or ordinance in their church. Bishop Kandodo from the Apositoli Zion Church (16) quotes Numbers 15:30 for this occasion, *“But the person who does anything defiantly, whether he is native or an alien, that one is blaspheming the LORD; and that person shall be cut off from among his people.”*¹⁹⁷ Bishop Makoko of New Zion Church (15) sees disciplinary action as an act on behalf of God. Excommunication is thus seen as a sacrament.¹⁹⁸ From an ecclesiastic and hermeneutical perspective, an act of exclusion is certainly not on par with communion and baptism, since these ordinances are about inclusion. Yet Kandodo’s and Makoko’s opinion answers anthropological concepts, since *“Ritual makes explicit the social structure.”*¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ Minister Chilowa Banda, ZCC, sermon, Majiga, Ndirande, Blantyre, 9.7.2006.

¹⁹⁶ Judges 6:19; J.W.M. van Breugel, *Chewa Traditional Religion*, Blantyre: CLAIM, Kachere, 2001, p. 91.

¹⁹⁷ Int. Bishop G.G. Kandodo, Chileka, 8.8.2004.

¹⁹⁸ Int. Bishop P.E. Makoko, Kaluzi, 28.2.2006.

¹⁹⁹ Edmund R. Leach, *Culture and Communication*, Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp. 14f. In: Brian Morris, *Anthropological Studies of Religion*, Cambridge: University Press, 1987, p. 220.

9. Leadership

“Johnson never aspired to being a bishop
all he wanted to do was to go from village to village.”²⁰⁰

The theme of leadership has its place in the wider context of salvation in this chapter. For the leaders of any church can so much distract from the Head, which is Christ, that the very foundation of the church is shaken, if not removed. Young churches, those that have not yet gone through a leadership transition, depend a lot on their founder’s testimony and inherent theology. Any discussion about the idea of salvation is incomplete without mentioning the claim of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, and, intrinsically linked, that *ecclesia* is or is not such a body of believers that recognizes the bishop of Rome, the General Overseer from Ntcheu or the *mlevi* at Chimutu village. Malawi’s Zionist churches are much younger than the oftentimes centuries old institutionalized denominations from the west, giving us all the more reason to look at their leaders’ testimonies, offices and powers.

a. Patterns

When it comes to the governing of a denomination, three systems can be found worldwide: *Episcopal* leadership means that the highest authority and final court of appeal is vested in one person. The RCC is the prime example for this style of leadership. *Synodal* church government has spread authority and responsibility to more than one person. The synod (also called council, national executive etc.) can have representative functions and will be led by a chairperson or moderator. However, in contrast to the Episcopal system, the chairperson of a synod will not have more power than all members of the council combined. Most Protestant denominations in the world are governed by synods. The *congregational* system acknowledges no authority in the church above the local

²⁰⁰ Bishop Paulo Litumbi’s memoirs as narrated in: Helen E.P. van Koevering, *Dancing their Dreams*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005, p. 162.

assembly. Local churches can be nationally organized, with a synod or bishop at the helm, but they are, in the end of the day, independent entities. They can call or dismiss their own local leaders, purchase and sell on their own, stand financially on their own feet and can opt to leave the national organization. In Malawi as well as everywhere else Baptists are organized congregationally.

Churches adopt leadership structures from political and societal organizations. For Latin America, Peter Wagner ascribes part of the phenomenal growth among Pentecostal churches to their leadership system. Growing churches have copied the *caudillo* leadership style, with one charismatic and strong leader at the top.²⁰¹ For the Zionists in Swaziland and South Africa, Sundkler claims that the kingship pattern of leadership can be found in all independent churches.²⁰²

The Zionists in Malawi have always been surrounded by secular forms of government which are autocratic, even oppressive. The Ngoni were ruled by the Inkhosi, the paramount chief, from Shaka onward.²⁰³ The paramount's authority was absolute and he was at the same time (and most of the time) the military commander-in-chief. Under him served the royal councillors, *izinduna*, between two and four of them comprised the highest council. On the third level were the *amakosana*, lesser chiefs. They could, however, be younger brothers to the paramount and govern entire districts. The first three levels were manned by people from the royal line; and especially the Inkhosi had to have royal blood in their veins. Thus, Ngoni government was monarchic and dynastic by succession. Then, on the fourth level, came the *alumuzana*, overseers over several villages or smaller districts. The last level, the lowest rung on the Ngoni government's ladder, was reserved for the *madoda*. These were old men who wore the head ring for having distinguished themselves in battle and for having shown wisdom in council.

²⁰¹ C. Peter Wagner, *Lektionen aus der weltweiten Erweckung* (engl. *Spiritual Power and Church Growth*), Mainz-Kastel: Projektion J, 1986, pp. 62f.

²⁰² Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets*, London: Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 102.

²⁰³ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 97.

The paramount's powers, however, waned during the course of history. Once settled in Malawi, the growing royal court turned out an administrative machinery, where hardly anything was decided by the Inkhosi alone. In some instances, the paramount's authority was reduced to representation, while influential councillors and shrewd backroom dealers sat at the helm of power. Common to many royal African rulers is a council where everybody is free to speak his mind. The chief speaks last; he has the last word, yet trying to reconcile the conflicting views of his advisors. *"In conflicting situations...Shona philosophy...finds a solution in the form of a compromise rather than a radical alternative."*²⁰⁴

Ngoni history shows two aspects concerning leadership succession: all Ngoni expressed unlimited loyalty once a paramount had been accepted by all of them.²⁰⁵ But until then, fractions and strife ruled the day, and these could threaten the very survival of the Ngoni nation.²⁰⁶ It so happened, that a dying Paramount nominated his heir.²⁰⁷ The heir-apparent would then stand at his father's or uncle's last resting place, on one leg and leaning against his spear, until the smoke from the funeral pyre had died down. All this, however, was no undisputed succession. Councillors and headmen had a lot to say and would intervene if someone else but the first in line promised to be more suitable. That lineage alone did not do meant that the successor needed to have charismatic powers, in the Weberian sense of the word. The simple fact that an interregnum happened several times in Ngoni history shows that succession was hardly ever undisputed and that transition procedures were not in working order (one might argue that the continent still suffers under this).

The colonial time was introduced by a rather brief display of superior fire-power and military resources, but what really distinguished and permanently marked this period and the Malawians in it was the set up of

²⁰⁴ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol. 2, The Hague: Mouton, 1974, p. 116.

²⁰⁵ Desmond D. Phiri, *From Nguni to Ngoni*, Limbe: Popular Publications, 1982.

²⁰⁶ Bridglal Pachai, "Ngoni Politics and Diplomacy in Malawi, 1848-1904," in: Pachai, ed., *The Early History of Malawi*, London: Longman, 1975, p. 183.

²⁰⁷ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 53.

an administrative bureaucracy. Things had to be done in a certain order. Procedure and protocol became all important. Paper has power. Money, passports and other government prints came to regulate every day affairs. Exactness became a law. Borders, relations, race, property, even words fell under the rigid demands of exactness. The British drew lines all over the country, dividing regions, creating districts, separating languages and encircling a new nation, whose borders are still the same today. The overlords exploited the land and the people, yet those early forms of industrialization and the suppression of the people helped to mix them and forge a common consciousness, which later resulted in the birth of independency.²⁰⁸ If church government had earlier been patterned along the cultural and autocratic lines of the Ngoni and colonial rulers, then post-independent Malawi did not suggest a change in leadership style. For Kamuzu Banda reigned with an iron fist and his leadership style, in turn, has been emulated by church leaders.²⁰⁹

The first churches founded by European and South African missionaries were (and are) governed by an episcopal system. If synodal, as is the case with the CCAP, then the Malawians would need at least one generation until they were admitted to the council. The atmosphere in a church was certainly friendlier than in a mine compound or on a tea plantation, yet the leadership functioned along the same lines, autocratic and domineering, giving the people no leeway in their own religious affairs.²¹⁰ In front of African eyes was displayed the splendour of the Anglican and Roman Catholic Church hierarchy. Titles, dresses, golden gloves saddled with rings, ornate staffs and all the honours pertaining to high office were shown off in front of mostly barefooted worshippers. All this must have baffled, impressed and alienated the local population. Mass was still held in Latin, neither did the Protestants come short of duplicating their European customs into the churches by introducing words and concepts like *Moderator* and *Kirk session*. Access to church

²⁰⁸ P.E.N.Tindall, *History of Central Africa*, London: Longman, 1997, p. 263.

²⁰⁹ Ulf Strohhorn, *Pentecostalism in Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005, p. 155.

²¹⁰ Yesaya Z. Mwasi, *Essential and Paramount Reasons for Working Independently*, Zomba: Kachere, 1999, pp. 15f.

office came late; ordination of Malawians was on average only at the end of the second generation. Transitions of clergy serving on the highest level in Malawi were not decided in the country, but in the corridors of the Vatican and in the home offices of Foreign Mission Boards.

The leadership system in Malawi's Zionist churches draws from the political, cultural and ecclesiastic forms of government mentioned above. It is not only, as Sundkler interpreted, an escape into the political past, bringing back the lost glory of the Zulu kingdom.²¹¹ All forms of government, which surrounded the first Zionist churches in South Africa and later in Malawi, be they secular or ecclesiastic, primal or colonial, were autocratic.²¹² There simply was no other pattern to choose from. That is, most denominations are led by a bishop, whose powers are either total or, in most cases, curbed and assisted by a powerful council. The bishop in Zion presides over his fellow leaders. His voice weighs strongest in the highest council, but he must make use of this prerogative; or else control might slip out of his hands. Not one denomination works along the congregational system. The Zion Christian Church (8) is the only denomination in Malawi that is not independent, for they do not have a national bishop. This prerogative belongs to the Lekganyanes in South Africa. All other *machona* churches, which came out of churches existing under the same name in South Africa or Zimbabwe, have lost communication with those parent bodies. Let it also be noted that, while we are dealing with independence, no resident missionary from overseas has ever been sent to the Zionists in the country.

²¹¹ Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets of South Africa*, London: Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 102.

²¹² Piet Naudé, *The Zionist Christian Church in South Africa, A Case Study in Oral Theology*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, p. 79.

b. Offices

“Structure is content itself.”²¹³

For example, the Samaria Zion Church (25) with its headquarters at Manjawira Trading Center, Ntcheu district, has seven levels of leadership:

214

1. Goza (deacon)

To the men, this lowest rank brings plenty of practical duties with it. They sweep the church, tune the drums, take care of the cracks in the church building etc. Women are not allowed to rise above this level in the church and the female *goza* are called *akokeri* (both words are from the Zulu language and are not in use outside Zion).²¹⁵ The *akokeris'* main duty is the visitation of sick members.

2. Mlaliki (preacher)

With duties accordingly. Their ministry of preaching the Good News takes place outside the church. They are busy at Manjawira market and other places.

3. Mvangeli (evangelist)

Preaches in the church and has, in addition to the *mlaliki*, administrative duties.

4. Mlembi (secretary)

Is responsible for correspondence, minutes and serves as the custodian of all church records.

5. Mlevi

²¹³ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973, p. 115.

²¹⁴ Int. Nikisoni Zalengera Chawango, Manjawira, 14.10.2007.

²¹⁵ The Zulu term *umkhokheli*, means *leader of women*. Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 60.

Is the pastor of a local class.

6. General Mlevi

He is in charge over all the *mlevi* and has authority over financial matters in the council.

7. Bishop

Leader of the entire church. He has the final say in all matters. The Samaria Zion Church is a rather small denomination and the hierarchy is simple. The Zion ya Bata Church (2) is larger; they have twelve different leadership levels. There are, for example, the *asodzi* (fishermen), which try to persuade people to come and settle at Zion. The *maeklezia* have a duty to entertain visitors who come to the church, while the *oweruza* (judges) make up a panel to dissolve disputes among the believers.²¹⁶

Looking at all Zionist denominations, the highest officer is called *bishop*, *senior bishop*, *general overseer*, *inspector*, *national general secretary* and three denominations call their leader *archbishop*. Only one denomination uses a Chichewa word for the office. The Ifa-ifa Zion Christian Church (4) is led by *mdindo* Mateyo Kawenga, *mdindo* meaning the one carrying the responsibility. The duties and prerogatives of a bishop are manifold. Ordinances are used to bind the church in unity. In some denominations, e.g. the CCACZ, only the bishop is entitled to distribute the elements.²¹⁷ This enhances his status while it implies a lot of travelling, too. Water baptism is usually carried out by bishop Dimba in the Zion Sabbath Church (18).²¹⁸ The bishop presides over the highest council, mostly called the National Executive Council. Archbishop Kanjere of the Entopia Zion Church (14) leads this council, which convenes once a year in April.²¹⁹ Bishops wield most of their power by deciding for or

²¹⁶ Int. Inspector Matthew G.P. Mlauzi, Gen. Secretary Hastings E.N. Mbewe, Vice Gen. Secretary Jackson J.M. Chisale, Salima, 22.3.2003.

²¹⁷ Stansfield Kazokoko, "Malinkaka Church: A Case Study of an Independent Church which Seceded from the CCACZ", Zomba: Chancellor College, Department of TRS, 1980, p. 3.

²¹⁸ Int. Mr. Mzowa, Bishop S. Saguga, Bwanje, 3.3.2006.

²¹⁹ Int. Archbishop Setifiketi Kanjere, Blantyre, 5.3.2004.

vetoing ordinations. In the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3), only the bishop has the right to ordain. In the absence of theological institutes and training programmes, which provide a course that eventually installs people in ministry, the personal judgement of the national leader becomes all the more crucial.

Office bearers serving immediately under the bishop are called *junior bishop*, *vice bishop* or *general mlevi*. *Bishop* is a subordinate designation if the overall leader is called *archbishop*. There seems to be an inflation of the title in the Zion Christian Prophecy Church (11). They are led by four archbishops, but told us of 800 bishops in Malawi and 626 bishops in Zambia.²²⁰ Anyhow, those serving on this level have distinguished themselves locally and, together with the *mlembi* (the general secretary) and the overall leader, form the national council. It convenes, on average, between once and four times a year. These men will also, if the church is large enough, come from different districts in Malawi, thus they carry a regional mandate in the council. Other churches have even more grassroots representation in the council. In the Chipulumutso Zion Church (29), every class sends three delegates to the National Executive. One *mlevi*, one secretary and one *mkokeri* (deaconess) represent them.²²¹ National leaders in the New Zion Church (15) of Bishop Makoko are expected to perform their duties and it has happened that those who had not worked properly and those who had excelled by absence were replaced.²²² National secretaries have to take care of annual conferences, their preparation and logistics. They often function as *master of ceremony* in the big meetings.

The *mlevi* is the highest spiritual authority in the local church, comparable to the pastor in Pentecostal and evangelical churches. (A Zionist assembly in Malawi is usually called a *class*; in South Africa, the word *band* is more widespread.) The word *mlevi* denotes the Old Testament Levite, it is not a mispronunciation of the English abbreviation

²²⁰ Int. Archbishop Paul S.K. Hara, Archbishop McLaud T. Kacheche, Mthebama Mission, 13.7.2005.

²²¹ Int. Bishop S.B. Kasuzo Phiri and Harry Patson Phiri, Dombale, 1.3.2006.

²²² Int. Bishop P.E. Makoko, Kaluzi, 28.2.2006.

“Rev.” Local members normally relate to their *mlevi* like a spiritual father. In some denominations, the *alevi* have special duties, which set them apart from other office bearers. For example, in the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3) only the *alevi* are allowed to baptize. They have the right to preach and to delegate this ministry, which is no light responsibility. *Alevi* usually combine their care over and compassion for the flock with a healing ministry. This also makes sense since “*People of lower ranks have no right to lay hands on the people of higher ranks.*”²²³ A *mlevi* is to distinguish himself in more than one way if he is to rise to regional or national office. A growing church is a strong recommendation, faithfulness over the years helps and supernatural confirmation through healings won’t hurt either. However, most bishops are advanced in age, Zionism is conservative by nature and therefore too much youthful exuberance will not result in quick promotion. It is an unwritten law in all churches that someone be married should he aspire for higher office. Bishop Kayenda gave us three reasons: A married man can take better care of visitors and others who need his ministry. An unmarried man cannot handle complicated counselling issues pertaining to marriage. A leader who is not married can easily fall into temptation, whereas the married *mlevi* “*is protected by his wife.*”²²⁴ The last point is probably the most important. Moral conduct must be beyond reproach for someone who aspires to higher office in Zion.

Under the *mlevi* serves the *mvangeli* and the *mlaliki*, the evangelist and the preacher. Their ministry is to proclaim the Good News, and Zionism, in public. Zionism is ingrained with evangelism; the place and structure of these offices express it well. In the CCACZ, the *mvangeli* baptizes new converts. Another public function is their preaching ministry at funerals, which exposes them to a wider audience.²²⁵ Being a *mvangeli* and *mlaliki* is the most important training stage in Zionism. One can be

²²³ Int. Jameson Office, Senior Inspector, Zion ya Bata (2) and other leaders, Salima, 29.7.2007.

²²⁴ Int. Thomas E.W. Kayenda, Salima, 28.7.2007.

²²⁵ John Nindi, *Chirimba Christian Apostolic Church in Zion, Its Establishment, Organization and Beliefs*, Zomba: Kachere, 2006, p. 7.

called into this office by simply being faithful and by showing some zeal for the church. From there, it becomes a stepping stone towards ordination as a *mlevi*. A successful evangelist will not only add to the ranks of the church; he will attach followers to himself.²²⁶

Local *alembi*, secretaries, often lead the meetings, serve as readers during the sermon, and in general see to it that the Zionist sense of order and protocol is being followed, especially before and during the ordinances. They record prophesies in some denominations.²²⁷ Secretaries do not need to qualify by expressing much zeal, as is the case with the preachers. Often those who are able to read and write are chosen for this office. Yet their usual calm demeanour, paired with proven organizational skills, can qualify them to be called as *alevi*.

Deacons are on the lowest rung of the ladder. There are no special entry requirements and so almost all ordinary members, men and women, are called *deacon*. Giving duties to all members, however small these may be, will install a feeling of togetherness and purpose. Some denominations have *akuluakulu*, elders. It must be ascribed to Zion's emphasis on doing, rather than being, that deacons and evangelists form the majority, if compared to elders. Another reason is that elders play a greater role in non-Zionists churches, whose main ministries, pastor and evangelist, are transferred to another parish after some years. In Zion, however, the *mlevi*, *mvangeli* and *mlaliki* are much more rooted; many of them serve their whole life in one local church, thus making the need for permanent resident elders smaller.

It seems contradictory that an enthusiastic religion like Zionism is governed by such a rigid hierarchy of officials. Furthermore, many of these spirit churches have a written liturgy, which they have shown us. It reads like a script, down to every verse that is read, of their Sunday afternoon services. Malawi's Zionists love to have all their ducks in a row. It's hard to fathom how much they are hard-wired like this, but a

²²⁶ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990, p. 58.

²²⁷ John Nindi, *Chirimba Christian Apostolic Church in Zion, Its Establishment, Organization and Beliefs*, Zomba: Kachere, 2006, p. 7.

fondness for order and sequence has certainly come down to them during the British rule. D.C. Scott so pointedly expressed it by attributing a “*constitutional character*” to Malawians.²²⁸

What about the prophets, which can be found in all local classes? Interestingly, they are not listed in any hierarchy, which the Zionists told us or produced in written form. The meaning is that a true charismatic office cannot be confined within the structural order, which they themselves have set up. One becomes a prophet by supernatural calling, not by promotion along ecclesiastic lines. In most cases, the prophet does not move from his station. The antagonism between prophet and *mlevi* makes it usually impossible for the prophet to switch sides. They are, by the character of their ministry, permanently ineligible for promotion. Authority in the church is therefore held by the wise, not the ecstatic. Prophets might take over a meeting and whip up a collective excitement, but they are structurally not able to take over the helm of the church. Many of our Zionist denominations are so old that they have gone through leadership transitions. Maturity and wisdom, which sometimes come with old age, are always respected in this part of the world. Younger leaders pay a lot of homage to their predecessors and even retired bishops are consulted on the big issues. Examples from other cultures denoting the differences between prophetic and priestly office run parallel to this observation from Malawian Zionism.²²⁹

It has to be borne in mind that the Zionist hierarchy as such holds its own attractions. The churches started in the 1920s during an era, when spiritual office was simply out of reach to normal Malawians worshipping in the mission churches. Many Zionist *machona* became local founders, quickly adopting titles and prestige among their peers. In Africa, accumulating ‘wealth in people’ is the key to commanding resources and status.²³⁰ If this is set in contrast to the western requirements for the

²²⁸ Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM, 1997, pp.63ff.

²²⁹ Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, London: Methuen, 1965, p. 69.

²³⁰ Tracy J. Luedke, “Presidents, Bishops and Mothers”, in: *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 47.

ministry, submission to the church and academic learning, then the Zionist alternative becomes all the more appealing. Academic studies for the ministry have never been a requirement in Zionism, even people who are not able to read and write become preachers and pastors. Moreover, this does not only pertain to ordination. People are drawn to Zion because they are offered a far more active role in all church activities. Offices are so manifold and the local churches usually small that every member has promotion within his reach.

c. Transitions

“...and it does so by providing the alibi
that the behaviour is that of spirits
and not of the human beings themselves.”²³¹

Leadership is not annually reviewed neither are bishops subject to terms of office. The leaders of the New Zion Church (15) explained that appointments of office bearers are for life.²³² The bishop’s demise is the most common reason for a change of leadership.²³³ A full blown crisis is at hand if a sitting bishop deviates from Zionist ethics. One example are bishops going for biomedical treatment in the CCACZ or a leader having a change of mind towards polygamy.²³⁴ It will bring loss of prestige, if not dismissal and, as described in chapter 3, denominations have been split over these issues.²³⁵ A transition period naturally plunges a church into crisis, especially if it is the first transition after the founder has died. A cheerless example for this is the Zion ya bata (2). Bishop Ng’ombe passed away in 2001 and at the time of this writing, 2010, the church has not yet managed to install a successor. In a way, they honour their founder by

²³¹ Jack D. Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion*, New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 123.

²³² Int. Bishop P.E. Makoko, Kaluzi, 28.2.2006.

²³³ Int. Bishop S.B. Kasuzo Phiri and Harry Patson Phiri, Dombole, 1.3.2006.

²³⁴ Int. Bishop W. Ngodzo, Mazonda village, 11.1.2005.

²³⁵ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Zionism and Faith Healing in Rhodesia*, Leiden: Afrika-Studiecentrum, 1970, p. 53.

this. On the other hand, the church is in a stalemate as long as the situation continues. The national leadership is split between three inspectors, with insufficient cooperation between them. They have no transition mechanism and elections are seen as something evil.

Out of respect for the incumbent, many denominations do not plan ahead. Or the current bishop leaves this in 'the hands of God' and does not bother with the issue. *"Succession? That will be a question after I die, not now."*²³⁶ Others have taken better care of the future, as is described below.

The transition brings different requirements, which must be weighted against and reconciled with each other. All churches want a degree of supernatural confirmation or leading, which usually involves the prophets in the process. The bishop's legacy must be adhered to and his councillors have much influence. Yet democracy has some leverage in the country, at least as an ideal, and so we can find grassroots involvement in quite a number of churches. Elections take place in a few Zionist denominations.

Dynastic succession

When the episcopate is patterned after chieftainship, succession from father to son or nephew is the obvious option. Dynastic succession is the natural course among Zimbabwe's Zionists. *"...[it] had been agreed between D. Masuka and S. Mutendi that the survivor of the other would ordain the eldest [son] of the other."*²³⁷ In Malawi, the Haras are an established dynasty in the Zion Christian Prophecy Church (11). Matthew S.M. Ngwenyama founded the Ethiopia Zion Church (9). After his death in 1988, both sons and his daughter took over the leadership and nowadays the founder's grandson serves at the helm. The same succession took place in the Jordan Zion ya bata Church (5). Natani Kawenga was succeeded by his son Mateyu. Mateyu Kawenga is in very advanced in age

²³⁶ Int. Archbishop Pearson Fasinesi Lipenga Magagula, Kunthawira, Chileka, 12.5.2005.

²³⁷ C.Z. Mutingwende, *The Church of God in Zimbabwe*, www.aic_research@yahoogroups.com, 15.3.2006.

by the time of this writing and has already handed over the reins to his son Paulo Kawenga.²³⁸

Dissent can happen when no kin of the former leader takes over. Typical is the Jesus Church, which bears many traits of Zionism but belongs to the *Vapostoli* cluster.²³⁹ Bishop M. Makawa took over after the death of Bishop Ntonyo in 1990. Nthonyo's son could not tolerate this. He moved away from home, with the church records, settled at Ulongwe and calls himself the bishop of the Jesus Church. Bishop V.N. Kamwana of the Apositoli Zion Church (16) had already pointed out his successor before he passed away in 1993. Still, Goodson Gabriel Kandodo was no kin; his credentials were only of a spiritual nature. Fighting over the chair ensued. Kandodo prevailed at the end, but "giving" the church to someone outside the founder's family is beset with difficulties, as this example shows.²⁴⁰

Dynastic succession prevailed in the CCACZ in Lilongwe. Samuel Kayange, national leader of the CCACZ in Ntcheu, had appointed Fesitala Velemu as bishop over the Lilongwe district, with Frackson Newa serving as his deputy. Velemu died in 1989 and many people in the church expected Newa to become the successor. However, Ntcheu appointed Suwela Velemu, son of the deceased, to the position. This points to the power, which headquarters still hold over the periphery, at the same time it underlines Newa's loyalty to the CCACZ.²⁴¹

The leaders of the Mpingo wa Atumwi (17) assured us that there cannot be any quarrel over the mantle of national leadership, for there is an automatism in place, which simply kicks in at the appointed time. During his tenure, the bishop appoints his vice. The two of them work closely together and the bishop is supposed to train his understudy, too. The vice bishop becomes the national leader after the death of his predecessor. This has, however, happened only once, and the current

²³⁸ Int. *Mlevi* Sentisimenti Diyele, Lilongwe, 22.11.2007.

²³⁹ Int. Bishop Marko Makawa, Balaka, 12.8.2003.

²⁴⁰ Int. Bishop G.G. Kandodo, Chileka, 8.8.2004.

²⁴¹ Int. *Mlevi* Frackson N.J. Newa, Charles Msampha, Livison Chisamba, Joseph village, Chimutu, 14.5.2008.

leader, Samalani Kumuyamba Chisale, is a brother to late Bishop Masina, so the absence of dynastic succession could be disputed.²⁴²

Dynastic succession is, according to Furseth, a sign of stable societies.²⁴³ The leader, also among the clergy, simply 'belongs' there, at least his nomination is automatically in place. Leadership in Africa is sacred, even in the political realm. However, in some cases, I would interpret dynastic succession as a rather desperate attempt to keep an outdated tradition alive and an ailing regime in power. North Korea is an example in the political arena, but some Zionist churches in the country fall into this pattern, too.

Committee

Churches with a strong executive committee usually decide succession in this highest council. Nomination happens through the National Executive Committee and only its members stand a chance of being chosen. Succession is not dynastic in the Entopia Zion Church (14). In 2004, the National Executive Committee decided to install L. Ligopolo as their new leader, with the blessing of the incumbent Kanjere. Later the entire church approved his appointment. Ligopolo's title so far is Bishop, and will probably stay that way as long as Kanjere is alive. Moreover, the peaceful transition points to maturity and strength within this Zionist denomination, for Ligopolo's ethnic origin is Yao, whereas Kanjere stems from the Ngoni.

Elections

Elections take place in the larger Zionist denominations in the country, in the CCACZ²⁴⁴ and in the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3). The national leader is voted into office in the latter church. All classes will be informed to come for the election. Every baptized member is entitled to cast the

²⁴² Int. *Mlevi* Dickson Chigona, Manja, Ntcheu, 27.2.2006.

²⁴³ Inger Furseth, Pål Repstad, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion*, Aldershot: Ashgate, p. 145, 2007.

²⁴⁴ Int. *Mtsogoleri* Levison Chisamba, Yacobe Walasi, Lumbadzi, 28.4.2008.

ballot and women are allowed to vote, too. Nominees must be class leaders and the constitution restricts their number to four. The ballot itself is secret.

K. Kalombola became the bishop of Sinai Zion Church (21) after founder Alstone Kaleke had passed away. Kaleke made it clear before his death that he wished Kalombola to take over the mantle; he had even asked his children not to contest for the top job. The church confirmed his last wish in a general meeting when they voted Kalombola into office.²⁴⁵

The electorate, however, is not seen as the sovereign. Elections complement the process, which involves the wish of the former bishop, his council and the prophets. Perhaps an ideal process, seen from their perspective, was the enthronement of Bishop Foster Chauluka in the above mentioned church (3). He was the son-in-law of the founder Mtokoma; the members voted for him and this was, in turn, confirmed by prophetic utterances.

Prophetic Confirmation

In their understanding, dynastic, synodal or democratic appointments are not sufficient procedures. There is need for divine confirmation and this will call the prophets on stage. As mentioned above, Siwetala Velemu became the successor to his father, Festala Velemu in the CCACZ in Lilongwe.²⁴⁶ There was an election, different delegates from the classes voted and the majority favoured Velemu. However, after that, *“the prophets looked into it to see whether it was true.”*²⁴⁷

Prophets, as we have seen, do not stand for office because they are “beside” the church’s hierarchy. Yet they wield a considerable influence on the hierarchy. The Apostolic Faith Church (7) abhors elections. *“The next General Overseer of the church will not be chosen by human mind, but by divine appointment.”*²⁴⁸ It is the prophets’ and prophetesses’ task

²⁴⁵ Int. Bishop K. Kalombola, Blantyre, 13.4.2004.

²⁴⁶ Int. *Mtsogoleri* Levison Chisamba, Yacobe Walasi, Lumbadzi, 28.4.2008.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Int. E.G. Zingwa naBengo, Bishop L.Z. Bengo, A. Julius, Dzipirana, Ntcheu, 17, 18. 8. 2005.

to communicate the appointment. Access to higher office is impossible without spiritual confirmation in the Chipulumutso Church (29). All executive committee members are appointed by prophetic revelations.²⁴⁹ In this, the Zionists differ from the *Vapostoli* churches, which are in general ruled by lineage. There the prophets have no say during the entire transition process, it is a family affair.²⁵⁰

Dreams are the most important prophetic tool at this junction. Zionists interpret good dreams as coming from God, whereas bad dreams are seen as whispers from the devil.²⁵¹ They do not ascribe bad dreams to ancestors²⁵² who rumble about something and need to be appeased by a sacrifice.²⁵³

We have already seen that dreams play a role in spiritual conversion and one's choice of church affiliation.²⁵⁴ They surface, too, when a church is in crisis or about to make major changes. However, dreams which future bishops take as a legitimation to start their own church, or night visions, which prophets receive to champion a new leader, are called "official dreams" by Malinowski. They are expected and will run along lines which tradition has set out.²⁵⁵ Sundkler has shown that Zionist churches in South Africa are oftentimes founded because of dreams and visions.²⁵⁶ This, in turn, has its predecessor and parallel in the calling of the traditional diviner among the Zulu. In the Christian milieu, the dream is therefore a liberating event, helping the recipient to break ranks with his former denomination. This pattern can be found in Malawi, too. A

²⁴⁹ Int. Bishop Square Binosi Kasuzo Phiri, Harry Patson Phiri, Dombole, 1.3.2006.

²⁵⁰ Lucy S. Banda, *The Masowe and Maranke Apostles in Malawi: Dynamics of the Entry, Growth, Development and Impact, 1950-2002*, MA, Zomba: University of Malawi, 2003, p. 47.

²⁵¹ Int. *Mlevi* Dickson Chigona, Manja village, Ntcheu, 27.2.2006.

²⁵² Walter A. Elmslie, *Among the Wild Ngoni*, London: Frank Cass, 1970, p. 71.

²⁵³ Int. *Mlevi* Dickson Chigona, Manja village, Ntcheu, 27.2.2006.

²⁵⁴ Steve Chimombo, "Dreams, Conversion and Ntara's Man of Africa", Brill: *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 19, 1, 1989, pp. 48-70. Marthinus L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol. 2, The Hague: Mouton, 1974, p. 148.

²⁵⁵ Bronislaw Malinowski, *Sex and Repression in Savage Society*, Oxon: Routledge, 2007, p. 77.

²⁵⁶ Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets*, London: Oxford University Press, 1961, pp. 270f.

“liberated” spirituality, sparked by dreams and visions, will break forth into a new AIC denomination.²⁵⁷

The most graphic example comes from a *Vapostoli* church, but similar cases are known within Zionism. The dreams and visions which disturbed Albert Mpochera so much while studying in 1979 at the Bible College of the AFM, the oldest Pentecostal church in the country, and which eventually led to the founding of God’s Message Apostle Church, can be interpreted as a liberating force. Mpochera comes from Chileka. Nominally a CCAP member, he had been in touch with dancing Zionists at his home even before he joined the Pentecostals. He was converted through a vision wherein a rod of silver was given to him with which he could ultimately destroy the devil.²⁵⁸ Once converted to the Apostolic Faith Mission and accepted as a student at the college, he found himself oppressed by academic classroom learning, books and a rigid hierarchy, wherein the power to ordain him rested with a foreign missionary. This was not the spirituality Mpochera had in mind. Dreams, visions and even angels occurred to him more frequently during his second year studies so that his fellow students had the impression these experiences helped him to escape from college duties. He failed his exams, but by that time he had already heard God’s voice commanding him to become the new Elijah for his generation. Thirty years later, Mpochera has become a much respected leader among the *Vapostoli* and Zionist church leaders at Chileka, they call him an *atumwi*, apostle.

The above mentioned Bishop Phiri (29) dreamt how people died in their sins, and even those calling themselves Christians in the church he was attending were enslaved to sin. This he interpreted as legitimation to start his own denomination, which he henceforth called Chipulumutso (Salvation) church.²⁵⁹ Bishop Velemu believed that an angel had spurred him on to start his CCACZ branches. The messenger from heaven had

²⁵⁷ Int. Bishop Makawa, Balaka, 12.8.2003.

²⁵⁸ Hans Ditthardt, ed., *Velberter Missionsnachrichten*, “Testimony of Albert Watson Genirst Mpochera,” Velbert: Velberter Mission, no. 5, May 1977, p. 2.

²⁵⁹ Int. Bishop Square Binosi Kasuzo Phiri, Harry Patson Phiri, Dombolo, 1.3.2006.

repeatedly appeared to him in dreams.²⁶⁰ Sometimes dreams serve as a pretense for personal aspiration. To openly declare candidacy, to actually say that one wants to be a bishop, would be interpreted as too much hard ball among the Zionists. One has to go about this much more diplomatically, couched in spiritual speech with dreams as supernatural confirmation.

d. Laity and Clergy

"Prosperity is hardly in their sights.

The focus is rather solidarity, discipline, and networks under a strong and centralized leadership."²⁶¹

Malawian Zionism seems to be a lay movement. Yet a deeper analysis shows that there is a professional clergy leading the churches. What puzzles the outside observer is the fact that their system is on almost all counts the reverse of what separates laypeople and the cloth in Europe and North America.

Not one bishop, according to our count, studied theology or entered formal tertiary studies. Neither has anyone of them obtained the MCSE, Malawi's School Leaving Certificate, which entitles for further studies. One General Overseer only went to school for three years and became a bricklayer. Another finished his primary school and worked as a fish fryer before becoming bishop. This, however, should not lead us to take them as unlearned men. They are leaders, some of them for decades, and they know their people. They have intrinsic knowledge of customs and some possess diplomatic skills on the highest level. They boast a commanding Bible knowledge, often paired with finely honed rhetorical skills. One can

²⁶⁰ Stansfield Kazokoko, "Malinkaka Church: A Case Study of an Independent Church which Seceded from the CCACZ", Zomba: Chancellor College, Department of TRS, 1980, p. 3.

²⁶¹ David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002, p. 137.

learn from them, first of all that education and wisdom are two different things.

Zionism is a low budget religion. Not that they do not need money, as one might observe.²⁶² Their churches have no income generating projects and they are not supported from overseas coffers. Many congregations meet out in the open, mainly because the choreography demands this. Still, they are quick to point out that a building would be nice in the rainy season. The bishops in Zion do not receive a salary from their churches. They tend their own gardens or sit in their own stores during the week. Malawian Pentecostals have made tithing a custom, the new charismatic churches emphasize even more than tithing, but Zionist hardly practice any regular giving to the church. One reason for this is their non-clerical background, stemming from the same source as early Pentecostalism in the USA. Having said that, Zionist members do give contributions to their leaders, especially in times of need. Zionism in Malawi is, in contrast to the younger charismatic churches, a very rural religion. And there are not many wealthy people in the Malawian countryside. Leaders may live in town, but in Africa, money only flows one way, and never from the countryside to the urban area. The bishop of the Apositoli Zion Sabbath Church (27) is up to this day a tomato seller at *Msika wa Njala* in Ndirande, Blantyre. In the neighbourhood is Bishop Mlangeni of the Zion Church (30), who runs a nursery school to make a living. Some Zionist churches, such as the Sinai Zion Church (21) do not collect money at all.²⁶³ Archbishop Kanjere of the Entopia Ziyoni Church (14) leads a denomination with 678 classes in Malawi and Mozambique, yet his main source of income has been his sewing machine all these years. In our talks, the Zionists strongly condemned younger churches that are “*only after the money.*” They are proud about their priestly ministry and for living on the same economic level as their followers.²⁶⁴ I have seen, for

²⁶² Matthew Engelke, *A Problem of Presence. Beyond Scripture in an African Church*, Berkeley: University of California, 2007, p. 159.

²⁶³ Int. Bishop K. Kalombola, Blantyre, 13.4.2004.

²⁶⁴ For a parallel situation among Mexico's Pentecostals, see Walter Hollenweger, *Pentecost between Black and White*, Belfast: Christian Journals Limited, 1974, pp. 48f.

example, how Bishop Loti Mbekeyani, leader of the largest Zionist denomination in the country, is every week subject to travel by mini-bus, and how some National Executives struggled to find enough food for their own members during their consultations.

Yet they are bishops. They are self-conscious about it and their people honour them accordingly. Ordinary members of the New Jerusalem Zion Church (19) will not address Bishop Saguga directly, but speak to him through an elder,²⁶⁵ which is, of course, a traditional notion in Africa, where a higher authority could only be approached through a go-between.²⁶⁶ The seating order in all meetings is strictly according to protocol. Secretaries will lay it on thick when introducing their superiors at the beginning of a service, with highest praises sung to the national leader. In some churches, only the bishop can distribute the elements. In the Zion ya bata (2), sprinkling holy water is the prerogative of the bishop.²⁶⁷ Their special attire sets them apart, too, and will not fail to catch the attention of onlookers. Bishop Kandodo (16) wears a red cloth on his shoulders whereas all other members are dressed in plain white. He uses a staff, too, which is called *Ndodo ya Aroni*. (The staff of Aaron, as narrated in Numbers 17, is about singling out leadership.) Some bishops in the Zion ya bata Church (2) are dressed in plain black robes, in contrast to all other worshippers who wear unornamented white robes.

Their spiritual status allows them to cross the border into Zionist ecumenism, a rare occasion. Zionists use to be very independent and do not easily mix with other churches; even other Zionists are rather shunned. However, the legitimization and anointing for some leaders has to come from outside.²⁶⁸ For example the Apositoli Zion Sabbath Church (27) has no contacts with other countries and keeps itself rather isolated from other Malawian groups, too. Still, Gresan Kamwendo received his

²⁶⁵ Int. Sporo Saguga, Wiwiza Saguga, Jordan village, Ganya, 7.3.2008.

²⁶⁶ Allan Anderson, Samuel Otwang, *Tumelo. The Faith of African Pentecostals in South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA, 1993, p. 99.

²⁶⁷ Int. Bishop Moffat P. Lichapa, Zion ya Bata (2), Ntcheu, 14.10.2007.

²⁶⁸ Int. Mrs. F. Chaluluka, Rev. R.L. Gama, Rev. L. Mbewe, Rev. P. Makanani, Whwayo, 6.11.2005.

credentials and the episcopal title from a prophet called Gabriel, who is a member of the Mpingo wa Choonadi. Kamwendo also accepted a new, spiritual name. He is now called Abraham.

10. Summary: The Concept of Salvation

“The earthiness of African life demands that African salvation shall be as solidly material as biblical salvation.”²⁶⁹

We have studied in this chapter how the idea of being saved is the underlying grit of the Zionists’ worldview. Salvation is defined over and against evil. It is a wholesome experience and their offer of physical healing has to be understood in this context, too. With such an overarching tenet of salvation, evangelism becomes the main motivation and reason-for-being to the Zionist. The Bible defines redemption to them, preferably clad in Old Testament legislation. The creation of a parallel world, some might call it utopian, is to re-live as much as possible from the time and land of the Bible, thereby giving authenticity to the believers’ faith. One denomination actually facilitated their exilic dream of Zion in an ecclesiastic settlement. To all others, the new life is expressed and spurred onward through prayers and ordinances. At their best, leaders will be moral examples of what the salvation ideal implies. They establish their authority by reconciling two apparently contradictory tasks: to safeguard Zion’s traditions on the inside and yet to win outsiders to the faith. Evangelism is the main means of promotion in Zion’s ranks. It is here that social structure and spiritual elements interface; a confluence which neither anthropologists nor theologians can afford to ignore.²⁷⁰

The next problem links the former section about offices and officers even more with their concept of salvation. How does Zion’s personnel mediate salvation to their followers? Has any Messianic figure risen in Malawian Zionism? Is there, according to the Zionists’ understanding, salvation outside their churches? Moreover, how do Malawian Christians,

²⁶⁹ Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000, p. 117.

²⁷⁰ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, 2001, p. 145.

who are not Zionists, view them? Are they brothers and sisters in the Lord? What defines Christianity, and are the Zionists to be counted to the flock?

a. Malawian Messiahs?

The scare of a Black Messiah seems to have been inflated by European researches in South Africa.²⁷¹ (And who would, anyhow, come up with this theological fiction, which combines some fact with much hypothesis and call it “Black Messiah?”) Groups in Malawi, which ascribe more than human powers to their founders, are not Zionists. The *Vapostoli* of Yohane Maranke and the followers of Mbale Mbuu²⁷² have gone into this direction, described in the next chapter, yet they are still far away from, for example, the status that Joseph Smith has among the Latter Day Saints – as a “White Messiah.” According to their doctrine, nobody will go to heaven without a certificate issued by Smith.²⁷³

So far, Malawian messiahs have remained marginal. Chakanza came to the same conclusion already in 1982: “*In Malawi, leaders of the messianic or prophetic type are insignificant.*”²⁷⁴ Some make it to the religion section in the weekends’ newspapers, but they pose more as a curiosity than a monstrosity. Zionism in Malawi is in general, by comparison with South Africa, too dogmatized for any usurper to take Christ’s place. On the outside, I would ascribe this to a lack of millennialistic preconditions, which can propel such a figure to prominence. On the inside, their adherence to the Bible safeguards the Zionists to a good degree from a

²⁷¹ Stephen Hayes, “Sundkler deconstructed: Bethesda AICs and Syncretism”, <http://www.geocities.com/missionalia/bethesda.htm>. Sundkler introduced the group of ‘Messianic’ churches (apart from Ethiopianism and Zionism) in the second edition of his *Bantu Prophets*, in 1961. Bengt Sundkler, *Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists*, London: Oxford University Press, 1976, pp. 327f.

²⁷² http://www.dacb.org/stories/malawi/jalazi_fredriko.html. 7.1.2010.

²⁷³ Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 6:229, 7:289. <http://www.journalofdiscourses.org>. 7.1.2010.

²⁷⁴ Joseph C. Chakanza, “Towards an Interpretation of Independent Churches in Malawi”, *Africa Theological Journal*, nd., vol. 11, 1982, p. 135.

personality cult resulting in idolatry. Zionism is by nature not a seedbed wherein personal aspirations can grow into megalomania, at least not while the aspirant is alive.

Yet traits of posthumous glorification can be found. Founders exercise influence long after their earthly demise. Their doctrines are considered sacred; their style will be imitated for a long time. Members of the Apostolic Faith Church (7) are very sensitive when it comes to their founder's legacy. Herbert Kakhobwe had, for example, introduced 'white dustcoats,' and those are still to be worn in every service. Novelties are regarded with suspicion and answered by an emphatic statement such as, "*no, such things were not told to us by our parent [kholo]. And he himself did not do such things.*"²⁷⁵

The late founder of the Zion Christian Church (8), Engenas Lekganyane, is revered among his followers in Malawi, too. Instead of saying, "*May the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob bless...*" they utter this formula: "*May the wonderful blessings of the Almighty God of Engenas, Edward and Barnabas be with us all.*"²⁷⁶ Naudé tries to soothe the problem of Lekganyane being called *lord* and *father* by pointing to the oral hermeneutic prevalent in the church.²⁷⁷ Apart from the titles, the figurehead of the ZCC has not been ascribed a messianic status, and the Lekganyanes themselves and official ZCC literature have denied any divine attributes.²⁷⁸ There is even a hymn in the ZCC which asks the founder himself to repent.²⁷⁹ As a matter of wishful identification, we have a tale in the Malawian church which assumed Lekganyane to have been a *mtchona* from Mzimba. However, this 'oral tradition' could not be verified. Engenas Lekganyane was born in Thabakgone, Mamabolo,

²⁷⁵ Int. E.G. Zingwa naBengo, Bishop L.Z. Bengo, A. Julius, Dzipirana, Ntcheu, 17, 18. 8. 2005.

²⁷⁶ Int. Minister M'gomezulu, Blantyre, 29.6.2003.

²⁷⁷ Piet Naudé, *The Zionist Christian Church in South Africa, A Case Study in Oral Theology*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995, p. 40.

²⁷⁸ Allan Anderson, Samuel Otwang, *Tumelo. The Faith of African Pentecostals in South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA, 1993, p. 101.

²⁷⁹ Piet Naudé, *The Zionist Christian Church in South Africa*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995, p. 62.

Limpopo Province, between 1880 and 1885.²⁸⁰ If anything, this tale, which speaks of Lekganyane's Malawian incarnation, would make him more human, not divine. For the ZCC in Zimbabwe, Daneel describes S. Mutendi as a half-way Messiah.²⁸¹ This is, however, an etic compilation of what others ascribe to the man. A subjective declaration by Mutendi is missing; it has probably never been made.

As described above, the Zion ya bata church (2) has problems of getting on with life after Enock Ng'ombe's death. He was a very charismatic figure with an extraordinary gift for physical healing. The



quality of this ministry left the church with its founder. *"After Ng'ombe's death, all those miracles, signs and wonders started ceasing gradually."*²⁸² Moreover, finding a successor was not an option while the bishop's widow was still alive, according to culture. The congregation erected a mausoleum for Ng'ombe, which stands right beside the main church at

²⁸⁰ Allan Anderson, *Zion and Pentecost*, Pretoria: UNISA, 2000, p. 68.

²⁸¹ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Zionism and Faith Healing in Rhodesia*, Leiden: Afrika-Studiecentrum, 1970, p. 57.

²⁸² Int. Mlevi T.E.W. Kayenda, Zion ya bata (2), Salima, 29.7.2007.

their settlement, *see the picture with the leaders at Salima in front of the building*. The place is kept very clean. His picture is placed on top of the concrete sarcophagus. Two things came to my mind as I entered the mausoleum. One is the striking similarity between Ng'ombe's and Isaiah Shembe's final resting place at Ekuphakameni, Durban.²⁸³ Shembe was first misinterpreted to be a Black Messiah by white researchers, later some of his own followers fell into the same trap.²⁸⁴ I saw a blasphemous bumper sticker on a car in Johannesburg in December 2004, saying "*Shembe is the Way!*" Ng'ombe's followers do not assume him to be divine, although highest respect is shown by anybody approaching the mausoleum. The other notion which came to mind when entering Ng'ombe's final resting place is that the tomb reflects traditional burial customs. His ethnic origin was Ngoni, and his final resting place combines Ngoni and Yao traditions, the later being the people of the area where he had lived all his life. An old custom among this ethnic group was to honour their chief by burying him inside his hut, or they even built a house over the grave.²⁸⁵ The Ngoni immortalized their paramounds by guarding their spirits in a hut, which was erected for that purpose and stood in the village, where he had lived.²⁸⁶ These traditional concepts have been architecturally translated in the Zion ya bata. The main church hall, Ng'ombe's former house and the mausoleum form a triangle and are just a few steps from each other.

However, there are signs that the church will recover and leave Ng'ombe as human as he was. In a local church, which we visited in 2006, they did not any longer mention his name in the official address. The salutation was,

Let me give honour to the heavens where our King Jesus Christ dwells,
let me also give honour to the sacrificial altar where God's prophets

²⁸³ See the picture on p. 80 in Sundkler's *Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists*, London: Oxford University Press, 1976.

²⁸⁴ Bengt Sundkler, 1961 and G.C. Oosthuizen, 1976.

²⁸⁵ A.W. Cardinall, *Native Life in East Africa*, London: Routledge, p. 194. See Desmond D. Phiri, *From Nguni to Ngoni*, Limbe: Popular Publications, 1982, p. 75 for royal burial customs among the Ngoni.

²⁸⁶ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 48.

dwelling, honour to our pastor and honour to our visitor, and honour to our Big Mama [Mayi Mkuru, Ng'ombe's widow, still alive at that time, but not present] and all the women.²⁸⁷

While all believers stated in the interviews that their church is the best and that no other could possibly have the same clout, many Zionists assured us that salvation is not found in their churches only. They have no problem to accept members from other Zionist denominations in their own ranks and usually a rebaptism is not required. Moreover, their horizon is wider than their own kind. The bishop of Chipulumulutso church (29) expressed that *"our church has relations with all churches in Malawi that believe in Jesus as the Saviour of mankind."*²⁸⁸

b. Ancestor Veneration

Ancestor veneration is not officially sanctioned by the churches. It takes place as a form of the underlying worldview in this region, namely animism, *not* as part of Zion's spirituality.²⁸⁹ The same can be said about many other Christian churches in the region. Only few denominations tolerate it officially and incorporate ancestral veneration in their liturgy.²⁹⁰ These can be found in Malawi, too, but none of them belongs to the Zionist cluster.

Any kind of spiritualism is anathema to the Zionists, yet some members across all denominations are involved in it "under the counter," so to say. Zionist leaders were rather outspoken on the issue. To them, that is the other end; those people are not yet saved, but are very much in need of salvation.²⁹¹ There is no constructive effort to integrate ancestral veneration into their doctrines and liturgy, as others have

²⁸⁷ Joseph Jimu, sermon, Zion ya Bata (2), Chidothe, Mlumbe, Zomba, 16.7.2006.

²⁸⁸ Int. Bishop S.B. Kasuzo Phiri and Harry Patson Phiri, Dombole, 1.3.2006.

²⁸⁹ (Traditional) Malawians are not animists in the strict sense of the word. See Brian Morris, *Animals and Ancestors. An Ethnography*, Oxford: Berg, 2000, p. 199.

²⁹⁰ Adrian Hastings, *African Christianity*, London: Seabury Press, 1976, p. 55. See also Linda E. Thomas, *Under the Canopy*, Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1999, p. 6.

²⁹¹ Int. Mrs. F. Chalulukwa, Rev. R.L. Gama, Rev. L. Mbewe, Rev. P. Makanani, Whwayo, 6.11.2005.

attempted when outlining their theoretical concepts for a church in Africa.²⁹² While the research has shown that ancestral rites do not happen inside any Zionist church, a few denominations are tolerant with what happens on the outside. Leaders of Entopia Zion Church of Ngwenyama (9) and Entopia Zion Church of Kanjere (14) know that some of their members practise a form of ancestral devotion and they tolerate this.²⁹³ One female member of the CCACZ called for respect for those departed, because “*makolo ndi mulungu wang’ono*” (*parents [or ancestors] are a small god*).²⁹⁴ Now, one can go and theologize this statement and conclude that the good lady has fallen into idolatry. It is, however, not a theological, but a cultural and psychological assertion and should be interpreted accordingly.

In Malawi, ancestors are related to with varying degrees of involvement. There is remembrance, honouring, veneration and invocation. The *vimbuza* complex, described in chapter 4, is a form of ancestral invocation. Sacrifices take place, too. Most common is to pour out some flour or beer under a tree and thus “feed” the spirit of the departed. The first two, remembering and honouring, certainly happen among the Zionists and members of many other Christian churches. Like with most Malawians, proper funerals are important, so are commemorations on special days. One wants to do the right thing and takes caution not to fall out with protocol. All this, however, is a far cry from declaring Zionists per se ‘ancestor worshippers.’ “*Animal sacrifice, ancestor worship, witchcraft and divination are common elements of a Zionist expression of Christianity.*”²⁹⁵ The statement refers to the South African scene, about which I am not able to give any verdict. For Malawi, no church affirmed animal sacrifices to take place, although they were all asked about it. Witchcraft and divination are reasons why people become

²⁹² Benezet Bujo, *Afrikanische Theologie in ihrem gesellschaftlichem Kontext*, Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1986, pp. 99.

²⁹³ Int. Bishop S.F. Msalawatha, Mbemba, 13.5.2004.

²⁹⁴ Int. Mayi Estere Mpatse, CCACZ, Ndirande, 10.3.2010.

²⁹⁵ <http://www.ccczion.org/missions/missions.htm>. 16.4.2010.

Zionists – they run away from it and find refuge in the churches.²⁹⁶ It would therefore be a psychological contradiction to ascribe these things to Zion. Looking at Malawi, it would be wrong to call ancestor worship an “*expression of Zionist Christianity*.” Ancestral veneration takes place among some of Zion’s members, yes. But not as part of their Christianity. It is on the outside of Zion.

Two notions from Zion’s theology hold ancestral cults in check. For one, the functions of this traditional tenet have been replaced to a good degree. Much of what was derived from ancestors is now received from the Holy Spirit and from angels: guidance, authority, inspiration and even chastisement.²⁹⁷ Some churches hold the belief that every Zionist has an angel, much like a personal escort who is commissioned by God to protect them. Others stated that their angel writes down everything they say. In the Ifa-ifa Church (4), they take it that the devil has sent someone, too, a bad angel, a demon, who is out to trouble them all the time.²⁹⁸ Holiness on the part of the believer will cause the good angel to have the upper hand in their lives. These notions and their testimonies about conversion and calling make it clear that Zionists do not refer any longer to ancestors as a point of spiritual reference. Second, we have so far seen how innovations within Malawian Zionism, which deviate from western imported Christianity, find their legitimacy through Scripture. Drumming, healing and the purification ceremony serve as examples. Ancestor veneration, however, does not have a Biblical endorsement, on the contrary. Contact with the deceased is called spiritualism and is strongly condemned in the Bible; Deut. 18:11. This the Zionist leaders pointed out in the interviews.

²⁹⁶ Schoffeleers rightly observed that the difference between mission churches and Spirit churches is that in the former, leaders command their followers to renounce ‘pagan’ practises, while in the Spirit churches, the members themselves demand this. Matthew Schoffeleers, *River of Blood*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992, p. 110.

²⁹⁷ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol. 2, The Hague: Mouton, 1974, p. 335.

²⁹⁸ Int. Bishop Chenjerani Laison, Evangelist Harold Kanyamphula, Mkwinda, Dowa, 28.5.2008.

Apart from spiritual reasons, the societal and organizational strain, which traditionalists suffer under, too, made some of them cross over to Zion. Mr Bamus' example from Mbande village is a case in point. He became a Zionist out of disappointment, for a *nyau* ceremony was refused after a close relative had passed away.²⁹⁹

c. *Salvation and Malawian Zionism in Historical Perspective*

There has certainly been a shift in judgement which outsiders have passed on Zionists. Sundkler, in his day and age, wrote from a missionary perspective, a western Lutheran viewpoint. He could not but see Zionism as a heathen religion, a bridge which brings people back to where they came from. They become traditionalists all over again, although the backdoor is painted in Christian colours.³⁰⁰ He also pointed out that South Africa's Pentecostals were not in favour of the Zionists.³⁰¹ Sundkler later mellowed somewhat. He recognized the total impact, which being a Zionist meant, and could speak of a turn to the future, how the Zionists' baptism and healing are "...positive, restoring powers. Here the Spirit is experienced."³⁰² Naudé, after much discussion and theological detours, tries to answer the question if Zionists are true Christians.³⁰³ He finds a cautious yes by pointing out that the ZCC in South Africa worships the same God as other Christians. He derives their major theological tenets from hymns and rightly emphasizes Christology. His reluctance, however, is due to the status which the ZCC ascribes to its founder. Moreover, according to Anderson, whose research is local yet framed within a wider

²⁹⁹ Matthew Schoffeleers, *Mang'anja Traditional Religion*, Zomba: Kachere, 2008, pp. 232f.

³⁰⁰ Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets of South Africa*, London: Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 216.

³⁰¹ Bengt Sundkler, *Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists*, London: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 255.

³⁰² Bengt Sundkler, Christopher Stead, *A History of the Church in Africa*, Cambridge: University Press, 2000, pg. 840.

³⁰³ Piet Naudé, *The Zionist Christian Church in South Africa, A Case Study in Oral Theology*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, p. 136.

AIC perspective, “[Zion] *does not betray its essential Christian character and has liberated it from the foreignness of European forms.*”³⁰⁴

I am reluctant to give any verdict. Two factors make it difficult to conclude whether Zionists are “Christians or not” (and whether their congregations are Christian churches or not). For one, salvation is by its nature not institutional; redemption is not wrought by belonging to a church. It is individual faith in Christ, which is accredited to the believer as righteousness before God (Romans 5:1). Therefore the question is whether the denominations provide a framework for the individual through proclamation, doctrines and rituals to have faith in Christ, or if the same activities distract from Him. The variety of the thirty denominations in the country makes it further difficult to arrive at a generalized conclusion about the Zionists.

Andrew Walls, however, listed different markers to identify “*historic*” Christianity; this is certainly a template which can be used in our quest for salvation among Malawi’s Zionists.³⁰⁵ The five characteristics are: a. The worship of the God of Israel, which also determines the character of God; b. the ultimate significance of Jesus of Nazareth; c. that God is active where believers are; d. that believers constitute the people of God transcending time and space and e. Christian acts expressed with water, wine and bread. This chapter has already answered the last two requirements with an emphatic ‘yes’: Malawi’s Zionists see themselves as the people of God and they express this through ordinances. Further, they believe that God is active where they are, because of their spirit-church character. They not only remember Jesus Christ, they want to experience Him. Sundkler stated that the Holy Spirit is “*the fundamental concept in Zionist ideology.*”³⁰⁶ The inner pilgrimage into the spiritual field is at the core of their service. The concept is lived, however, not in mystical seclusion but within the social network of the local assembly.

³⁰⁴ Allan Anderson, *Zion and Pentecost*, Pretoria: UNISA, 2000, pp. 194, 196.

³⁰⁵ Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000, pp. 23f.

³⁰⁶ Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, London: OUP, 1961, p. 242.

More must be said about their concept of God as the Lord of Israel, Walls' first marker. Zionists are not on the fringe of Christianity if the adoption of Israel serves as a "*universalizing*" factor, which brings Christians of all cultures and ages together through a common inheritance.³⁰⁷ As much as Malawi is distant from the country of Israel, so is 'Zionism', as a political and pro-Israel stand by the churches under survey. There is no relation between Malawian Zionists and modern Jewish movements in this regard. Type in "Zionism" on search pages on the internet, and one gets both, the modern Jewish Zionism and, with far fewer hits, African Zionism as a distinct cluster of Christian churches. Malawian Zionists have no share in present-day Middle East struggles. In most cases they would not know about T. Herschel and his Zionism, which brought about the modern state of Israel. Moreover, there is something called "Christian Zionism," wherein Christians, especially from the charismatic camps, feel a love and obligation to support the state of Israel.³⁰⁸ Neither can this attitude be found among the Zionist churches in this Malawi, probably because they are not interested nor does information reach them. Jewish Zionism and Malawian Christian Zionism share no point of contact, but that does not mean that they have nothing in common, as some writers on the subject have stated.³⁰⁹ There is the affinity of the Malawian Zionists with the Old Testament, and as much as a 'spiritual' brotherhood to the Jews can be established via this link. The spirituality shared is most evident in what I call the Old Testament prophetic character, which is still on display in the Zionist services in Malawi. Their moralizing sermons, the way they are distant from local politics yet have no qualms to reprimand chiefs about the ethical condition of their subjects (see next chapter), their constant reference to the Law of Moses as a moral yardstick, all these activities point to the

³⁰⁷ Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000, p. 9.

³⁰⁸ Paul Gifford, „The Complex Provenance of some Elements of African Pentecostal Theology“, in: André Corten, Ruth Marshall-Fratani, eds., *Between Babel and Pentecost*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001, pp. 74-77.

³⁰⁹ Piet Naudé, *The Zionist Christian Church in South Africa, A Case Study in Oral Theology*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, p. 98.

underlying prophetic character of the Zionists. It is not charismatic prophecy in the New Testament sense, but the Old Testament institution of prophecy as a counterbalance to secular powers in society and priestly powers at the temple. Furthermore, they do not just believe to be the spiritual heirs of Abraham, Moses and David. They try to physically reconstruct the Old Testament world by renaming themselves, their villages and rivers, by re-enacting Biblical scenes and dressing in such a fashion, too. This trend as such is remarkable. They have chosen an Old Testament identity and try to make it their own. Spiritually, they are treading on the same path as the early church, which also chose to accept the Jewish Old Testament heritage, without becoming Jewish as such.³¹⁰ Furthermore, one should not assume that Old Testament or Orthodox Judaism have been uncharismatic. Seeing our African Zionists frolic in circles reminds one of King David dancing before the Lord and of the Jews during Simchas Torah, when even the most orthodox believers fall into ecstatic chanting and dance round the Synagogue.³¹¹ Belief in the God of Israel implies monotheism and the acceptance of His holiness, which to His worshippers translates into the moral requirements laid down in the Law of Israel. I derive from my observations among them that the Zionists do worship the God of Israel. They worship the same God whom Jesus of Nazareth called 'Abba.'

This brings us to the last marker, the ultimate significance of Jesus Christ. The focal point of the Christian faith is a person, Jesus Christ. Standing at the center of all Christian doctrine and proclamation, salvific faith is defined as trust in Jesus and his vicarious sacrifice.³¹² This includes the belief in Christ as the Son of God, who brought a perfect and acceptable sacrifice so that God the Father confirmed Him, Jesus of Nazareth, by raising Him from the dead; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. It has been my observation that an ordinary member of a Malawian Zionist church can well grasp this through what is proclaimed, sung and read in the

³¹⁰ Harold W. Turner, "A Typology for African Religious Movements", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Leiden: Brill, Andrew F. Walls, ed., 1967, vol. I, no. 1, p. 9.

³¹¹ Oliver Sacks, *Musophilia*, London: Picador, 2007, p. 245f.

³¹² Karl Barth, *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik IV*, 4, Zürich: EVZ Verlag, 1967, pp. 14f.

churches. Other issues might overshadow this, such as the healing bustle and their persnickety legalism, yet Jesus' work on the cross *is* a constant reference point in their services. With all the pandemonium and costumes, it is still the Zionists' and the observers' task to focus on the essential. This essential tenet of any Christian church,³¹³ the ultimate significance of Jesus Christ, can be found among Malawi's Zionists. It is for this reason that, after much research and contemplation, this study has been titled 'The Zionist *Churches* in Malawi,' for they could be referred to as cults or sects if the characteristics of historical Christianity were found wanting. This is not done for the sake of canonization, nor of judgement, but to define the churches' faith, especially in comparison with other movements that have the name 'Zion' on their banners.

³¹³ Harold W. Turner, "A Typology for African Religious Movements", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Leiden: Brill, Andrew F. Walls, ed., 1967, vol. I, no. 1, p. 3.

6. Culture: Two Circles

1. Inner Circle: The Zionist Life in Family and Rituals

“If contextualization is about getting to the very heart of the culture, and Christianity is taking its place there, will not the Christianity that emerges look very much like a product of that culture?”¹

Being a Zionist bears down on every aspect of life. Zionist families live their own culture distinctively different from Malawian mainstream society. This chapter sets out to pronounce these differences in their rites of passage, marriage, gender and economic enterprises.

a. Contraception, Birth and Purification

“African religious systems and values were only transformed on the basis of perceived African needs.”²

In line with African *and* Christian worldview, Zionists view children as a gift from God. Marriage is supposedly blessed with children; barrenness is seen as a curse which is sought to be lifted by prayers and other treatments. Childless women are in fact a major clientel, seeking Zionism out for a solution to their problem. Any kind of contraception is regarded as evil in the Zion ya bata Church (2).³ They reason that God commanded man to be fruitful and multiply, so any countermeasure is understood as disobedience. Even the thought of child spacing is condemned.⁴ The churches reproach the use of condoms, the pill and contraceptive injections. For the leaders of the Ifa-Ifa Church (4), condoms are

¹ Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, London: SCM, 1985, p. 150, in: Allan Anderson, *Tumelo. The Faith of African Pentecostals in South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA, 1993, p. 140.

² Helen E.P. van Koevering, *Dancing their Dreams*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005, p. 41.

³ Int. Mlevi Thomas T.W. Kayenda, Msangu, 28.7.2007.

⁴ Int. Bishop Moffat P. Lichapa, Zion ya bata (2), Ntcheu, 14.10.2007.

“*entirely evil*.”⁵ The use of such is even a reason for excommunication in the CCACZ.⁶ In the same vein, they condemn the use of *nkhuzi*. This waist string is a traditional *belief* in contraception. Worn by women, each knot in the string stands for years they hope will not see them pregnant. Opposition against any contraceptive measures is the stand across the denominational board. As with anything physical, prayer is supposed to be the remedy. Prayer is a Zionist’s means of contraception. If someone only wants a small family, then he should ask God thereof.⁷ Only Bishop Saguga of the New Jerusalema Zion Church (19), together with his wife Liwiza Saguga, gave a different answer.⁸ Some methods are wicked in their eyes, since they take place after fertilization and are therefore *kutaya mimba*, abortion. *Nkhuzi* is not a choice for members; it is regarded as superstition. However, with married couples, the use of condoms for the sake of child spacing is allowed. Prophets sometimes foretell the sex of an unborn child. In addition, there can be messages that the child to be born will be especially blessed. In the same vein, special instructions are given for ritual protection.⁹

The end of pregnancy poses a medical crisis to both mother and child; this is exacerbated in a country with insufficient medical facilities and in churches, whose worldview allows for ritual pollution. Zionists react to this with and within their own medical system. Even if a clinic is within reach, Zionist women will not go to hospital to deliver their children. They prefer for the birth to take place at home with the intent to avoid any interference from outsiders. Ritual pollution, not medical complication, is thus seen as the more serious threat to mother and child. When her time comes, a believer will want other Zionist women to act as midwives.¹⁰ In

⁵ Int. Bishop Chenjerani Laison, Evangelist Harold Kanyamphula, Mkwinda, Dowa, 28.5.2008.

⁶ Int. *Mlevi* Frackson N.J. Newa and other leaders of the CCACZ, Joseph village, Chimutu, 14.5.2008.

⁷ Int. *Mlevi* Chimdipiti, CCACZ, from Ulongwe class in Balaka, 10.10.2009.

⁸ Int. Bishop Sporo Saguga, Liwiza Saguga, Jordan village, Ganya, 7.3.2008.

⁹ Int. Mayi Mpatse, CCACZ, Ndirande, 29.6.2010.

¹⁰ John Nindi, *Chirimba Christian Apostolic Church in Zion, Its Establishment, Organization and Beliefs*, Zomba: Kachere, 2006, p. 13.

the Malawian countryside, elderly women often act as midwives, without any particular training but life itself. In the churches, these ladies act as birth attendants, *azamba*; in fact, their duties form an office within Zion's health system. Mayi Tabita Sayangata from Taavekenji village had a well known ministry within the Zion ya bata Church (2) because she often prayed successfully over difficult deliveries.¹¹ In the ZCC (8), giving birth at home is a doctrinal requirement. They pray over the woman and generous doses of holy water are sprinkled upon her should she encounter any complications. However, they have opted to use surgical gloves in recent years, *"This is also because of the situation we are in [alluding to HIV-AIDS]. Peace unto Zion."*¹²

After birth, traditional customs among the Ngoni and other cultures in the region called for ritual passage marking. With the Ngoni, newborn babies were taken to the medicine-man. He burned certain roots and held the baby above the smoke. The good spirits were invoked to protect the child and keep it from all harm. This was succeeded by a ritual washing, usually the infant was bathed in lukewarm water, with some leaves as herbal additive. Lastly, a cord was tied around the child's waist. A small bag was fixed to the cord, which contained *medicine*, again a protective measure. Upon his departure, the medicine-man would assure the family that everything has been done properly and therefore no harm would ever befall the child.¹³ None of this can be found among the Zionists.

Yet they have adopted the purification ceremony from Leviticus 12, which serves the same ritual purpose as the earlier Ngoni custom. Almost all denominations carry out the purification ceremony. The exception is the Apostolic Faith Church (7), which has a common root with the Apostolic Faith Mission. Malawian Pentecostals were governed rather early by foreign missionaries and therefore such a rite, even if it is mentioned in the Old Testament, could not establish itself among them.

The regulations from Leviticus 12 are observed in the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3). A woman is regarded unclean for one month after

¹¹ Int. Bishop Moffat P. Lichapa, Zion ya Bata (2), Ntcheu, 14.10.2007.

¹² Minister Chilowa Banda, ZCC, sermon, Majiga, Ndirande, Blantyre, 9.7.2006.

¹³ Masiye Tembo, *Touched by His Grace*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005, p. 40.

giving birth to a son and for two months after giving birth to a girl. During that time she is strictly forbidden to attend services or appear in public. She is not to touch a Bible, cook *nsima* or enter the husband's bedroom. At the end of her quarantine, the rite's importance is further highlighted by the demand for a *mlevi* to officiate it. The ceremony is held in the Apositoli Zion Sabbath Church (27), too. There, the young parents are invited to dedicate the child. Purification of the mother and dedication of the child go hand in hand, just as it was in Luke 2, only that no animals are offered. The mother is sprinkled with holy water in the church. Afterwards both, father and mother, have their feet washed outside of the church. In the Entopia Zion Church (14) the ritual starts with the mother approaching the church; however she is not allowed to enter. She waits for some time for the elderly sisters to come out of the church, take her by the hand and escort her into the building. Next, the mother confesses her sins because of uncleanness ("*akuvomereza machimo chifukwa anali wodetsedwa*") to the entire congregation. Then she hands her newborn over to either the bishop or a *mlevi*, who holds the baby in his hands and prays for both the mother and the child. Holy water is sprinkled onto both, afterwards they are declared clean.¹⁴ The New Zion Church (15) is following the same procedure, only that the father is included in all ceremonies! He, too, is regarded as unclean. Holy water is sprinkled over him, followed by the pronouncement that the entire family has now been cleansed. Upon this, the congregation reacts with loud applause and ululations.¹⁵

Neither traditional practice nor infant baptisms are an option to the Zionists. In their absence the purification ceremony has been chosen as a Christian rite of passage. It implies the welcoming of the newborn into the church family, although full membership can only come with baptism years later. At the same time the ritual acts as a rite of passage for the mother. Nothing expresses the ritual liminality of becoming a mother better than the Chinyanja word for pregnancy: *pakati*. She is literally "in between." The purification ceremony itself is about inclusion, yet the

¹⁴ Int. Marigeni Kanjere Nabanda, Entopia Zion Church, Mwansambo, Chileka, 14.5.2005.

¹⁵ Int. Bishop P.E. Makoko, Kaluzi, 28.2.2006.

underlying Hebrew concept that women are unclean because of giving birth serves the prevalent sexism in society and in the churches. More about this under the 'women' section.

b. Initiation

Ngoni society did not have initiation schools. The anthropologist Margaret Read, who lived among the Ngoni, probably captures their attitude well when she says that, in contrast to the matrilineal Chewa, "*They were half amused and half scandalized at the idea that young people had to be put in a camp in the bush in order to teach them how to behave.*"¹⁶ In general, puberty rituals were of a more private character.¹⁷ Girls, however, were put through *umsindo*, a ceremony immediately followed by marriage.¹⁸ It contained dances and songs that alluded to sexual intercourse. *Umsindo* was therefore abolished under the influence of missionaries from Livingstonia. Its functions were a show of wealth and status, for not every father could afford an *umsindo* for his daughter. It was further a public declaration of the girl's virginity, established by examination. Moreover, this rite of passage yet confirmed her belonging to the family which she was about to leave soon. Many of these traditions, about which we can read in books, are not alive any longer today, at least not among the Maseko Ngoni. Bishop Kanjere was born in 1918, but even he could not remember boys' houses, second teeth ceremonies or bathing in rivers as puberty rites.¹⁹

Circumcision for boys or girls was not practised among the Ngoni in Malawi, although they knew of male circumcision before and during the *mfecane*.²⁰ The Lomwe people in Malawi and Mozambique have

¹⁶ Margaret Read, *Children of their Fathers*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968, pp. 65f.

¹⁷ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 143.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 149. For a contemporary custom see Makhaza S.S. Phiri, *Puberty Rites for Girls in Mlefu-Mbemba Village in Traditional Authority Mzukuzuku at Embangweni in South Mzimba*, BEd, Zomba: Chancellor College, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, 2001.

¹⁹ Int. Archbishop S. Kanjere, Entopia Zion Church, Mwansambo, Chileka, 22.6.2005.

²⁰ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 21.

circumcised young boys, the custom is called *chidototo*.²¹ Boys are, of course, circumcised in the Muslim community. They teach that no uncircumcised Muslim can have access to the Supreme Being. In addition, those who are not circumcised are looked upon as outcasts. The circumcision of this type is called *Jando*. The strongest Zionist church in the Yao area (predominantly Muslim) is the Apostolic Faith Church (7), which was under the leadership of Bishop Mataka until he passed away in 2001. The church strongly prohibits its youth to go out and get initiated “*in the world*.” Zion’s boys are not allowed to be circumcised, although that is the custom in this Muslim area and could be derived from the Old Testament, too. Leaders hold the parents responsible if a boy steps outside and subjects himself to a traditional and/or Muslim initiation. The church is very serious about this; parents have been excommunicated because they were too slack in this matter. They see initiation outside the church as nothing but a free ticket for moral looseness and too much of a compromise with the Muslim faith. “*We don’t allow our children to go there and become backsliders*.”²²

In our first interview with Archbishop Kanjere, we were told that the Entopia Zion Church (14) was debating whether to start circumcising boys at the age of three and a half.²³ A year later, no course of action had yet been put in place, although the debate was very much alive in the church.²⁴ Plans were under way to get a response from their 678 classes throughout Malawi and Mozambique. Some parts of the church had wanted circumcision to become a rule to all boys born in Zion. By 2010, a new leader had been installed, Bishop Rex Ligopolo. They have decided not to circumcise boys in the church.²⁵ Yet they are very lenient in all cultural matters and will allow their members and their children to

²¹ Francis J.M. Bonongwe, “Initiation Rites for Boys in Lomwe Society: A Dying Cultural Practice?”, in: Joseph C. Chakanza, ed., *Research in African Traditional Religion: Initiation Rites for Boys in Lomwe Society and other Essays*, Zomba: Kachere Series, 2004, pp. 5-22.

²² Int. Justin Kachotsa, L. Mahata, Mr Mtabwa, Mwalasi, Machinga, 5.3.2006.

²³ Int. Archbishop S. Kanjere, Mwansambo, Chileka, 5.3.2004.

²⁴ Int. Archbishop S. Kanjere, Mwansambo, Chileka, 23.2.2005.

²⁵ Int. Archbishop S. Kanjere; Bishop Rex Ligopolo; Collin Gwirize; Mrs. Marigeni Nangodzo; Mrs. Chrisy Ligopolo, Mwansambo, 25.2.2010.

participate and undergo any traditional initiation, including circumcision. Yet others in the church strongly object to it.

Instructions given by women to girls are part of Malawian cultures.²⁶ Initiation camps and coming of age rituals are called *chinamwali*, *kutha msinkhu*, *chilangizo*, *kupatsidwa mwambo*, *dzoma* and *msondo* (and a similar tradition has been described among the Zulus, too.)²⁷ As a rule, Zionists do not allow their offspring to attend any camp outside the church. Yet they have installed camps, or at least seminars, within the church, thereby deviating from their Ngoni custom. A historical reason for this may be the Chewa influence upon the Ngoni. It has been a give and take between the two cultures. The Chewa matrilineal system suffered under the patrilineal Ngoni, yet Chewa customs resurfaced and even made inroads among the Ngoni as their military power waned.²⁸ Another reason is certainly for Zionists to react to needs of children and young adults in the churches. They try to prevent backsliding at all costs, seek to curb sexually transmitted diseases and early pregnancies and, eventually, want their young people to marry within the camp.

The Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3) forbids its young members to go to traditional initiation camps and ceremonies. Instead, they offer classes at home, with elderly members instructing girls and boys, separately. AIDS is a big issue during sessions, as it is in many of their sermons. Condoms are not mentioned, that would be leaving Malawian modesty too much behind. Instead, they hammer in abstinence in almost all of their addresses to the young people.²⁹ The Sinai Zion Church (21) holds an initiation ceremony for girls only. The instruction is given by elderly deaconesses in the church. A girl cannot be initiated before reaching puberty. Here they differ significantly from surrounding society, for it has

²⁶ Molly Longwe, *Growing Up. A Chewa Girls Initiation*, Zomba: Kachere, 2008. Rachel N. Fiedler, *Coming of Age. A Christianized Initiation among Women in Southern Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005.

²⁷ Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 124.

²⁸ Isabell A. Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*, Blantyre: CLAIM, 2000, p. 41.

²⁹ Int. Mrs. F. Chaluluka, Rev. R. L. Gama, Rev. L. Mbewe, Rev. P. Makanani, Whwayo, 6.11.2005.

become common for 6 or 7 year old girls to be initiated into the details of sex and marriage.³⁰

The women of Entopia Zion Church (14) have successfully blended traditional initiation rites with their own Christian type. This happens in three stages. The first rite is called *Ndakula*, literally meaning, *I have grown up* (and reached puberty). A song explains to the girls that this happens with the first menstruation:

Leader:	Namwali wakula (the girl has grown)	Girls:	wakula kumadzi (she has grown [it happened] at the water)
	Namwali wakula (the girl has grown)		wakula kumsika (it happened at the market)
	Namwali wakula (the girl has grown)		wakula kumanda (it happened at the graveyard) ³¹

The girls are taken to huts, where they stay with their female instructors for one to two weeks. The atmosphere, so we were told, is joyful, even jolly. One can hear many *nthungululu* (ululations) from the instructors. Special food is cooked; characteristic for this kind of camp are the *khobwe* beans, very round and brown in colour. The patronesses are usually called *anamkungwi* in this part of Malawi, but with Zion, they are named *akokeri*. These ladies explain about the body, menstruation and hygiene. Girls are instructed to be on the alert when their menstruation period approaches. They are shown how to use a piece of cotton or cloth. By way of teaching, the *akokeri* combine material from the secular repertoire with church songs. “*While we are at the ceremony, we sing our traditional choruses and other spiritual choruses; we also dance to the tune of drums*

³⁰ MacDuff Kapito, *The Impact of Yao Traditional Initiation Teachings on Women. A Case Study of T/A Malemia in Zomba District*. BA (Theology and Religious Studies), Mzuzu University, 2010.

³¹ Int. Mrs. Marigeni Nangodzo; Mrs. Chryis Ligopolo, Mwansambo, 25.2.2010.

used by women who can play them well.”³² Emphasis is laid on moral behavior, how to abstain from improper sexual relations and how, in general, show and receive respect in adult circles. A rude girl can even be disciplined by receiving a slap on her face. The leaders of the camp are frank when it comes to the subject of HIV/AIDS. They tell the girls that promiscuity and adultery can lead to sexually transmitted diseases. (From their sermons it becomes clear that AIDS is ostracized and seen as a scourge sent by God to sinful man.) Furthermore, they advise the girls to have their future spouses tested on the HIV virus before marriage.³³ The ceremony is Christianized in the sense that there is no *kuchotsa mfumbi*. “Taking off the dust” is ritual intercourse with the girl after she has returned from the camp. The belief is that this will take away any misfortunes. Entopia Zion Church is so well accepted in the community that the girls go, according to custom, to present themselves to the village headman after camp. Again, certain songs are sung and dances performed at the *bwalo*.

After some years, follows the second stage, which our interviewees called by an English name, *refresher course*. So, the content is the same, still no marriage preparation, but with more maturity and experience comes a different perspective and desire to talk about things. This second stage shows that Entopia Zion Church is not merely interested in ticking off their list an initiation ceremony, as a mere duty to tradition. They have a pastoral interest in people and exercise constant care. The third stage is the actual pre-marriage counseling, not held in a group but individually.³⁴

In the Apostolic Faith Church (7), girls are initiated by the help of the *akokeri* and *anamkungwi*, deaconesses and (female) instructors. These elderly sisters in Zion serve out of experience and because of their high moral standing in the community. It is probably best to call their “initiation” a kind of seminar. Only girls who have reached puberty are qualified to participate. They choose a quiet and undisturbed place at the church and stay there for four to five days. The *akokeri* explain the

³² Ibid.

³³ Int. Mrs Marigeni Kanjere, Entopia Zion Church, Mwansambo, Chileka, 22.6.2005.

³⁴ Int. Mrs Marigeni Kanjere, Entopia Zion Church, Mwansambo, Chileka, 14.4.2005.

changes of the body, stress respectful behaviour and caution the girls concerning their conduct with boys. Boys are instructed, too, by the elderly men in the church and, of course, separately from the girls.³⁵

The oldest Zionist church in the country, the CCACZ, has locally different initiation rites. In general, no camps are held for boys, yet they are instructed by the men in an informal way. After their first menstruation, the girls are naturally first instructed by their aunts and sisters. Mayi Mpatse, who is an *mkokeri* in the CCACZ, tells that the girl will be given water mixed with salt.³⁶ She has to drink it in order to avoid *kutupikana*, a physical condition believed to be caused by sexual polarities. She can be no longer sexually neutral now that her first menses has happened. Her parents are sexually active, a state which is called *hot* in Chinyanja. The girl is still sexually inactive; therefore she is in a *cold* state. These two conditions do not mix and any point of contact is ritually dangerous. She needs to drink the salted water, for food prepared by her mother has now become a potent danger. If not, her body might swell (*kutupa*), she will look anemic and draw misfortune upon herself. This cultural concept of sexual polarity is nationwide and is adhered to by the Zionists, too. However, grassroots initiation camps and some churches have the girls examined and, if found so, their virginity will be announced. Zionists refrain from such physical examinations; *"It is culture, a family matter, and has nothing to do with our Zion tradition."*³⁷

After these first instructions at home, the girls are taken by the CCACZ *akokeri* to a secluded place; they call it *chisimba* or *chisakasa*. They spend up to six days there and learn about things mentioned earlier. We asked Mayi Mpatse whether being so explicit about sex won't encourage the girl to become active at this early age. She answered:

Oh, no... What we do is to prepare the girl so that she will not be surprised with married life, it is a formal civic education for girls and failing which may lead to the girls

³⁵ Int. Justin Kachotsa, L. Mahata, Mr Mtabwa, Mwalasi, Machinga, 5.3.2006.

³⁶ Int. Mayi Estere Mpatse, CCACZ, Ndirande, 10.3.2010.

³⁷ Int. Mayi Estere Mpatse, CCACZ, Ndirande, 29.6.2010.

getting more harm than good. Sexual relations in a married life is a blessing from God, we don't want to leave girls in darkness. Many girls have gone into destruction because of ignorance or because they were misinformed by some ill-willed people. We give instructions that are very constructive, leading the girl to a healthy and happy family life.³⁸

As the camp draws to a close, the girls are taken to a river and wash themselves. Every girl is then led home in a joyous procession. She will be seated in front of the house, a veil is put over her and those wanting to see her face will have to pay a little fee for it. There are dances, every now and then someone will come up to the girl and wish her well at this new stage of life. Soon after this, she will be ceremonially cleansed for the first time in a Sunday afternoon service of the CCACZ by being sprinkled with holy water. This concludes the rites that pertain to her coming of age.

Like the Zionist midwives, instructing the young creates yet another office in which the women serve in the churches. In the Ufumu wa Yehova ndi Mikaeli Church (not Zionist, but with Zionist tenets) female instructors to the girls are called *Deborahs*, speaking of the wisdom which this office calls for.

This is again an area where the benefit of not being missionary-controlled comes to the fore. It must be seen as an achievement that these Zionists have not cast out the babe with the bathwater, as so many Pentecostal churches did, abolishing initiation completely and not replacing it with a Christian alternative. Not all missionaries made this mistake, yet the majority failed to see the custom's educational and social benefits.

To state the obvious, puberty rites among the Zionists strengthen sexual identity and prepare the candidate for adulthood. Moreover, both male and female leaders value initiation camps or seminars among girls tremendously, since their origins are neither in the Bible nor in Ngoni

³⁸ Int. Mayi Estere Mpatse, CCACZ, Ndirande, 10.3.2010.

culture. Their Christianized rituals seek to draw the participants closer to a moral life-style envisioned in the Law of Israel. The first step in this process is information, which the *akokeri* willingly share with their younger sisters and daughters. Another positive effect is the social bond which is oftentimes forged between instructors and their neophytes.

c. Women

Traditionally-minded chiefs often complain,
'These damned Zionists steal our women...'³⁹

Malawian women living in rural areas are surrounded by insecurity; leading in many cases to a life lived in anxiety.⁴⁰ They are often at the lower end of the family's food chain. Women are victims of domestic violence and are exploited as cheap labourers both in the villages and in the urban job market. From what I have seen, women bear the brunt of manual labour in rural society. They seek and prepare the firewood, tend the gardens, cook the food, do the laundry, bear, nurse and educate the children at home, build houses, run tuck shops and serve their husbands' needs. No wonder that Malawi is one of the countries where women are the primary producers of food.⁴¹ Girls are not sent to school in the same numbers as boys are; hence female Malawians have on average less education.⁴² In the cities, out of six officially employed people, only one will be a woman.⁴³ Women are in general married at a young age. In rural Malawi, 53% of all women are married under the age of 18 – according to a UN statistic from 2007.⁴⁴ This means that women are primarily understood as labourers and child-bearers. Male society has given them these roles and defines them accordingly. Because of that, many young ladies hardly experience something called 'youth.' The transition from being a child to adulthood, with work and marriage, can be very brief.

Several questions arise when considering the plight of Malawian women. What is the status of women in the Zionist churches? Where do they make a difference to wider society? Does her faith and religious

³⁹ S.G. Lee, "Spirit Possession among the Zulu". In: John Beattie, John Middleton, eds., *Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa*, New York: African Publishing, 1969, p. 154.

association help a Zionist woman to act more like an agent of her own life?

Growing up as a girl in a Zionist family will bring additional taboos onto her, to those of the surrounding culture are superimposed a full set of religious restrictions. While these will give her more safety, they will come at the price of reduced personal liberties. Girls are not kept in physical seclusion, but their socializing will be cautiously guarded from young age onward. Her parents do not go over to the neighbours for a beer; her brothers will not dance in taverns. The girls are not allowed to participate in traditional grassroots initiation camps, however much this may isolate them from non-Zionist peers. Initiation is performed in some Zionist churches, as described earlier, but not all churches provide this. It is common to send children to a secondary boarding school in Malawi. From what we have learned in the interviews, Zionists are not in favour of sending their children to a secular institute.

In rural Malawi, men and women still dress in a very gender-specific way. As girls turn into women, Zionists will make sure that dress codes are kept. In the Apostolic Faith Church (7), girls and women are not allowed to put on trousers. Earrings and necklaces are strictly forbidden. Make-up is seen as something devilish, leading to immorality in their eyes.⁴⁵ In the Chipiliro Church (12), ladies are denied to put on any perfume.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Helen E.P. van Koevering, *Dancing their Dreams*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005, p. 93.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁴² The literacy rate is 10-20% higher among male adults compared to women. <http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?q=malawi&d=GenderStat&f=inID%3a49%3bcrID%3a54.27.2.2010>.

<http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?q=malawi&d=GenderStat&f=inID%3a114%3bcrID%3a54.27.2.2010>.

⁴⁴ <http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?q=malawi&d=SOWC&f=inID%3a87%3bcrID%3a124.27.2.2010>.

⁴⁵ Int. E.G. Zingwa NaBengo, Bishop L. Z. Bengo, A. Julius, Dzipirana, Ntcheu, 17, 18. 8. 2005.

⁴⁶ Int. Bishop L. Dzonzi, Blantyre, 2.7.2003.

Zionist women are spared from certain traditions which, in their eyes, are pagan superstitions. Most informants answered, “*No, we do not do these things. Jesus has saved us from them.*” Already mentioned was the *kuchotsa fumbi* ritual. In the same class is a tradition known as *kutsitsimula*.⁴⁷ It is sometimes called female circumcision, which is technically right, yet the rite’s character is rather a sacrifice, out of despair. Herbalists among the Lomwe, Yao and Chewa in the south advise nursing mothers, whose children are chronically sick, to have parts of their (the mothers’) labia removed in order to bring good luck back to the child. The sickness complex as such is called *mauka*. Any young mother in Zion would be seriously reprimanded should she consider undergoing such an ordeal. (Entopia Zion [14] is an exception here. They do not perform *kutsitsimula* as a church, yet they do not stop members from going to the *sing’anga*.)⁴⁸ Other rites concerning female circumcision among the Yao (especially with the Atonya), who circumcise girls during the *msondo* camp,⁴⁹ or among the Lomwe,⁵⁰ are not tolerated among the Zionists.



⁴⁷ Int. Mrs. Marigeni Nangodzo; Mrs. Chrsy Ligopolo, Mwansambo, 25.2.2010.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Int. Rev. Wellem B. Kulanga, Ndirande, 8.3.2010.

African traditions and ancient Hebrew notions overlap in regard to menstruating women.⁵¹ They were barred from certain social and familial functions in Israel; Lev.15:19ff. Menstrual blood is handled very cautiously in Malawian cultures.⁵² And so, in Zion, women are not allowed to enter the services of the ZCC (8) during that time of the month, representing almost all other Zionists churches in this respect. With this comes the even stronger prohibition to partake of the Lord's Supper, neither are they allowed to pray over the sick. At home, she will be secluded to a certain degree. One leading couple in Zion said the sisters are not allowed to cook during their menses.⁵³ This custom had earlier been observed in secular society, too, but nowadays they only refrain from adding salt to the food.⁵⁴

Concerning the taboo of menstruating women three differentiations have to be made. First, seen from a subjective point of view, a break and some solitude are welcomed by many women. No matter how stigmatized they actually were and are, they look forward to some change in their routine and feel that the monthly pause from everyday and conjugal duties helps them to recharge their energies. I do not claim that these laws were given out of a purely benevolent heart, but want to state that there are positive side effects to the women concerned. Post-natal taboos, and to a certain degree even her menses point to the fulfilment which fertility and child-bearing mean to a woman in Malawian society.⁵⁵ Secondly, the Old Testament does indeed contain these laws to menstruating and post-natal women, but they have to be interpreted

⁵⁰ Michelle P. Sardella, *Lomwe Anthropology: Religious Tradition and Culture of the Alomwe of Phalombe District in Malawi*, Licentiate, Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 2003, p. 79.

⁵¹ Beverly I. Strassmann, "The Function of Menstrual Taboos among the Dogon", *Human Nature*, New York: Springer, vol. 3, no. 2, 1992, pp. 89-131.

⁵² Rachel N. Fiedler, *Coming of Age. A Christianized Initiation among Women in Southern Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005, p. 26.

⁵³ Int. Bishop Sporo Saguga, Liwiza Saguga, Jordan village, Ganya, 7.3.2008.

⁵⁴ Johan W.M. van Breugel, *Chewa Traditional Religion*, Blantyre: CLAIM, 2001, p. 121.

⁵⁵ On national average, a Malawian woman will give birth to six children. <http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?q=malawi&d=GenderStat&f=inID%3a14%3bcrID%3a54>. 27.2.2010.

with the background of ancient Canaanite superstitions and the particular situation that made these laws necessary. The fact that the prohibitions are not repeated in the New Testament and that Zionists denominations adhere to these laws, while they neglect other levitical prescriptions, brings me to the third point: Embedded in almost all African cultures and traditional religions are menstrual taboos.⁵⁶ These are not tenets from Zion, Illinois. The booklet, “Things We Believe,” which the church in Zion, Illinois, so nicely translated into Chinyanja for all their adherents in this part of the world, has a complete gap when it comes to matters of apparel, taboos and dietary laws.⁵⁷ Missionary-initiated churches such as the AoG in Malawi do not teach them.⁵⁸ Therefore menstrual and post-natal taboos are but a continuation of traditional African taboos under the mantle of Biblical legitimacy, which still fit into a “*contemporary frame of meaning*.”⁵⁹ Similar taboos are very much alive in Malawian families where nobody is a Zionist.⁶⁰ Anthropologists interpret the traditional African prohibition either as a sign of debasing women who can “pollute the sacred,” while others take them as a tacit confirmation of the female’s mystical powers.⁶¹ In Malawi, probably both interpretations are valid and find their applications.⁶² The Ngoni, in our case, are not different. “*Ngoni men were outspoken in condemning the effects of all women’s influences on boys.*”⁶³

⁵⁶ Beverly I. Strassmann, “The Function of Menstrual Taboos among the Dogon”, *Human Nature*, New York: Springer, vol. 3, no. 2, 1992, pp. 89-131.

⁵⁷ Administrative Council of the Christian Catholic Church, ed., *Zomwe Timakhulupirira*, Zion, Illinois: Christian Catholic Church, 1993, p. 59.

⁵⁸ Int. Mr. Sapala Phiri, Blantyre, 3.11.2004.

⁵⁹ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990 p. 23.

⁶⁰ Johan W. M. van Breugel, *Chewa Traditional Religion*, Blantyre: CLAIM, 2001, pp. 169ff.

⁶¹ Evans M. Zuesse, *Ritual Cosmos. The Sanctification of Life in African Religions*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985, p. 67.

⁶² Isabell A. Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*, Blantyre: CLAIM, 2000, p. 32.

⁶³ Margaret Read, *Children of their Fathers*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968, p. 49.

In Africa, womanhood is defined by her reproductive functions and barren women are stigmatized to the degree of “*non-personhood*.”⁶⁴ Infertility is not officially sanctioned as a reason for divorce, but nevertheless silently accepted in many churches across all denominations. The prevailing poverty in rural Malawi adds to the pressure. The more a marriage is based on economic reasons, the more likely it is to fail because of barrenness. The Zionists, however, protect women in this regard. Infertility, which might anyhow be caused by the husband as much as by the wife, is no reason for divorce.⁶⁵

Women in this country can be assaulted by witchcraft accusations and the threat of polygamy. We have seen in the preceeding chapter that women have joined Zion churches to escape such accusations. It is, to be precise, the spirit church character of Zion, which is so effective in this realm and which will help her out of her afflictions in no time. Outer signs help, too. Her uniform and the head scarf give her a nunlike demureness, which is immediately recognized in the community. In chapter 3 I mentioned how the wives reacted to their returning *machona* husbands that had converted to Zionism. They were relieved to see the much stronger moral standing which the men suddenly exercised. Polygyny, so common among many *machona*, ceased to be a threat among Zionist families. For all these reasons, women turn to Zion as a refuge. Finally, widows benefit from their association with Zion in two ways. They are again shielded from ritual practices, which can harm them, such as the *kuchotsa imfa* tradition, which is ritual intercourse with the widow after a short mourning period. This custom also contributes to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.⁶⁶ The other point is that Zion’s widows are better protected from becoming completely dispossessed by her deceased husband’s family.⁶⁷ Such property grabbing can happen to a

⁶⁴ Helen E.P. van Koevering, *Dancing their Dreams*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005, p. 49.

⁶⁵ Int. Archbishop S. Kanjere; Bishop Rex Ligopolo; Collin Gwirize; Mrs. Marigeni Nangodzo; Mrs. Chrisy Ligopolo, Mwansambo, 25.2.2010.

⁶⁶ Communication with Major Ted Horwood, The Salvation Army in Malawi, 11.3.2001, Blantyre.

⁶⁷ Seodi Venekai-Rudo White et al, *Dispossessing the Widow: Gender-based Violence in Southern Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere, 2003.

church member, especially if her husband was a non-Zionist. Yet the economic network, which exists among the members, and which is further described in this chapter, will prevent her from falling into absolute poverty.

To conclude this section, girls enjoy more protection as they grow up in Malawian *and* Zion culture. After puberty, they are shielded from cultural practices that can harm them physically and that are based on non-Christian beliefs. The main method of providing safety for women is to make sure that they marry within the Zionist camp. Zion's role expectations and their interpretation of Biblical laws serve to strengthen marriage and family ties, to the benefit of women, too. Considering the alternatives, especially in the country side, we can sympathize with women that have made a conscious choice for Zion. Yet women are put in place. Not only food, but women are tabooed, too. Very much alive among male Zionists is the *Delilah complex*, the belief that women weaken or betray.⁶⁸ Malawi is in general male-dominated, culturally speaking this is stronger among the Ngoni in comparison to the matrilineal Chewa. The churches in this study never rattle at the stronghold of male dominance. The gender power structure among them is not different from society. We hear of Zionists denominations being led by female bishops in South Africa.⁶⁹ Such a thing is unheard of in this country. Zionism in Malawi is androcentric.

Women in the Churches

"Of 68 diviners on record, 61 were females."⁷⁰

Bearing in mind that most African societies draw broad dividing lines between the sexes, we can now look at the role and ministry of women in the Zionist churches. This dividing line between the sexes is first of all

⁶⁸ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, London: Routledge, 2002, p. 190.

⁶⁹ Bengt Sundkler, *Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists*, London: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 79.

⁷⁰ Axel-Ivar Berglund, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989, p. 188.

strikingly manifest in their seating order. In many Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Malawi, women and men sit apart from each other during the service. This is not the case with some younger charismatic churches or the Jehovah's Witnesses organization. Still, it is a tradition in all mainstream Pentecostal churches and even in the CCAP. I know of some pastors who tried to have their congregations sit together as families, but to no avail; next Sunday they flocked together again according to the gender line. It is the same in Zion. Once the last dance has been danced and they settle down, men sit with men and women sit with women. To be precise, women sit on the left hand side of the altar or to the left of the speaker. Why is this the case and what do the Zionists themselves say about this issue?

In Nguni culture, women are symbolized with and attributed to the left. People and books are quick to point out that this is in no way derogatory, but complementary to the other side. Women had their place on the left in the Ngoni huts and they needed to congregate on the left in a traditional village meeting. The practice among the Zionists has become so traditional that many noticed it only when I had asked them about it. They thought for a moment and had their light bulb moment. This very reaction did, however, not promise much of an explanation from their side. One elderly mother in Zion, however, was not much dumbfounded and theologized the custom straight away, "*The answer is easy. We women sit on the left side because Eve was taken from Adam's left side.*"⁷¹

All Zionist churches in the country have organized women's meetings. In some churches, the ladies' gathering is called *mvano*; others use the English '*Sisters' Union*.' It is a well organized, mostly weekly function and, in many aspects, works like a church within the church. For here the women are free to preach, minister and counsel each other. They have their own collections and projects, which they support financially. The money flows back into the church, it often enables the male ministers to travel and purchase items for the church. In this way, the women exercise such an influence over the men that the latter are to a good degree

⁷¹ Int. Mrs. F. Chaluluka, *Mlevi* R. L. Gama, *Mlevi* L. Mbewe, *Mlevi* P. Makanani, Whwayo, 6.11.2005.

dependent on the *mvano*. Not often do male leaders visit the ladies' meetings, and if, then by prior arrangement.⁷² The women have meetings characteristic of spirit-churches and try to arrive in the spiritual field, albeit in a different fashion than in a general service. Lucy Kapito participated in the *mvano* meetings in a Zionist church in Mbayani, Blantyre, and reports that the women preach and prophecy in a particular order. One of them is 'seized by the Holy Spirit' and starts to proclaim a message with increasing emotion, expressing wave after wave their sentiments interspersed with Biblical promises. This reaches an emotional climax until another woman starts a chorus, thus signalling that it is time for the sermon to end. After the song, another woman will fall under the inspiration, and the preaching begins again. "*This pattern of praying, preaching and hymn-singing... is the rhythm of women organization.*"⁷³

In the New Jerusalem Zion Church (19), women have their own meetings, too. It is not all spiritual, since they have training sessions in which the older sisters instruct young women about domestic chores. These training units have attracted outsiders to the church.⁷⁴ Social visits form the backbone of women's ministry apart from their services. They visit the sick, oftentimes nurse them, too. "*When you are a mvano member you are not sick alone.*"⁷⁵ Healing rooms are attached to the bishop's house or form an institute on their own. These healing rooms in Zion are run by the sisters. Parallels to early Pentecostalism exist in this area, for women have literally found a place where they can minister freely.⁷⁶ Much is demanded of the bishop's wife in this respect, for the running of such a household and nursing home requires logistic and

⁷² Lucy K. Kapito, *Women in African Instituted Churches in Ndirande and Mbayani Townships, Blantyre City*, BA, Zomba: University of Malawi, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, 1995, p. 4.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Int. Bishop Sporo Saguga, Liwiza Saguga, Jordan village, Ganya, 7.3.2008.

⁷⁵ Lucy K. Kapito, *Women in African Instituted Churches in Ndirande and Mbayani Townships, Blantyre City*, BA, Zomba: University of Malawi, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, 1995, p. 4.

⁷⁶ Edith Blumhofer, "Life on Faith Lines: Faith Homes and Early Pentecostal Values," *Assemblies of God Heritage*, Summer 1990, pp. 10-12, 22. Quoted in: G. Wacker, *Heaven Below*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003, p. 134.

organizational skills. Her husband has to show hospitality and needs to help the poor, too. What was, in olden days, a strenuous work when the folks gathered at the paramount's village to dance *ligubo* or *ngoma*, is in Zionism the annual convention or national conference.⁷⁷ The ladies are busiest during this highlight in the church's calendar. The bishop's wife is responsible to attend to all guests and organize her *mvano* sisters to cook for hundreds of people.

While the *mvano* has carved out an important niche for female Zionists, which gives them space for ministry and expression of their spiritual life, it must also be seen as an institution brought about by the prevalent gender segregation in the churches. Women cannot voice their fears, feelings and hopes in the general meeting as they might wish to. In most denominations women are silenced in the church. They are not allowed to speak in front of men. Every time we asked for an explanation, 1. Corinthians 14:34 was quoted: *"Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says."* Archbishop Kanjere of the Entopia Zion Church (14) said that in his church women are regarded as unclean. That is why they cannot be in leadership positions.⁷⁸ In Zion ya bata (2), female healers are not allowed to perform this ministry during their menses, let alone visit the church during that time of the month.⁷⁹ Women are tabooed in the Apostolic Faith Church (7), too. Apart from preaching to their fellow sisters, they are allowed to preach to men who are not yet baptized. Once baptized, the line is drawn. A baptized man cannot be preached at by a woman in this church.⁸⁰

However, there are exceptions. Women are allowed to speak in front of the entire congregation in the Chipulumutso Church (29). One reason for this might be the fact that the church was only founded in 2001. Another reason is Mrs. Kapata. She has a powerful preaching ministry and

⁷⁷ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 103.

⁷⁸ Int. Archbishop Setifiketi Kanjere, Blantyre, 5.3.2004.

⁷⁹ Int. Mlevi Thomas W. Kayenda, Msangu, 28.7.2007.

⁸⁰ Int. Justin Kachotsa, L. Mahata, Mr Mtabwa, Mwalasi, Machinga, 5.3.2006.

her anointing is recognized by all leaders.⁸¹ In the Zion ya bata Church (2), I listened to Mayi Tsukatsuka preach in the Sunday service and even the brothers commented with loud *amens* from time to time.⁸² Some development happened in the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3). They earlier adhered to 1. Cor. 14: 34 and did not allow the women to utter a word during services. However, now they are even allowed to preach before men, given that they are ceremonially clean (not menstruating). A similar development took place in the Apositoli Zion Church (27). Founded by V. Kamwana, the ladies were never consulted on any decisions in the church. After Kamwana died in 1993, Goodson G. Kandodo took over the helm. He interprets 1. Cor. 14:34 as a situational prohibition to speak on some matters, but this does not mean that women are to be silenced in the church.⁸³

Women are silenced in many churches in Africa. The Nyanja women of the Anglican Church in Niassa Province, Mozambique, are hushed, too, but find their expression in dancing.⁸⁴ This would be a limited option for Zionist women. They are well able to express their devotion through physical movement, but dance patterns do not allow for them to reflect social conflict, neither would they be able to actually influence decisions in the church.

Yet Zionism provides a way for the ladies to make themselves heard. They *do* speak in front of the entire congregation, and this in *all* Zionist churches in the country, for prophecy is a female domain. It is not their monopoly, but the majority of prophetic utterances come from women. The spiritual field is so strongly established in their midst that it transcends the otherwise ironclad gender line. In Christ, there is neither male nor female (Gal. 3:28) and we can see this established in a culture, which otherwise discriminates so strongly between the sexes. Official hierarchy does not provide a place for women. However, prophecy is

⁸¹ Int. Bishop S.B. Kasuzo Phiri and Harry Patson Phiri, Dombolo, 1.3.2006.

⁸² The service took place on 22.1.2003 at their headquarters near Salima.

⁸³ Int. Bishop G.G. Kandodo, Chileka, 8.8.2004.

⁸⁴ Helen E.P. van Koevering, *Dancing their Dreams*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005, p. 16. Unfortunately, van Koevering does not describe the actual dancing.

superstructural and they can enter and make their influence heard in this spiritual realm.

As pointed out in chapter 4, prophecy is in many cases about admission to the church and its innermost core, the spiritual field. In the Spirit, women are given a say who can enter a meeting, what kind of concrete sin endangers the church and in which fashion the garments of the male leaders will be tailored. The sisters stand at the entrance to Zion. Parallel to their biological role, they are the spiritual mothers in the church. This is all the more enhanced when we consider that women are the chief evangelistic agents in the congregation. While they have this ministry at the entrance to Zion, I cannot see a specific gender related ministry at the exit. Kiernan states that in South Africa, women have a ritual role to play when a member dies.⁸⁵ This is not the case in Malawi. Yet, with ministering at the entrance point alone, it holds true that women are exposed to ritual pollution and will therefore have to undergo purification rites in the churches.

Zionism in Malawi is built around an axis. One end is male and is centered on the written Word, the Bible. Associated with this end is the permission to preach, literacy, formality and representative responsibility. The other end of the axis is centered on prophecy. It is predominantly female, it is informal, and it takes place in the spiritual field. *“So strong was the female preponderance in this field, that Daniel Nkonyane’s wife, Elizabeth, had to admonish, “Let now the Holy Spirit enter the men rather than the women.”*⁸⁶ The spiritual ministry in the churches gets going when this axis starts spinning in unison, as if Zion’s wagon starts rolling. Both ends condition each other; both seek legitimacy from the other. Zionists never tire to point out the (in their eyes: supernatural) harmony between what is prophesied and what is preached. Prophecy, in turn, is intertwined with healing. While the first is associated mostly with women, healing is again male territory to a good degree. Not only with the

⁸⁵ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990 p. 31.

⁸⁶ Bengt Sundkler, *Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists*, London: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 47.

Zionists, in all spirit-churches in Malawi is healing essentially the action of men upon women.⁸⁷ The axis is therefore a systemic coaction between formal and informal inspiration, between sanctioned and spontaneous anointing. It is interplay between the male and female elements in the church.

I interpret the prophetic ministry of women as something positive. Apart, or rather: as part of inspiration they are allowed to express themselves and their concerns for their community and church. The spirit-church character of Zion allows women to carve this niche out for themselves. It may be true that "*spirit possession is typically a female phenomenon arising from cross-sexual hostility in societies where men are dominant in the social structure.*"⁸⁸ Yet prophecy in Zion is too constructive to be a mere outlet of social frustration. It is not a symptom of "*the war between the sexes*"⁸⁹ but an answer to the problem. Through the Spirit, women can achieve ends, which cannot be obtained more directly.⁹⁰ Kiernan says that "book religions" tend to discriminate against women, whereas spirit religions allow them more prominent roles.⁹¹ This statement needs to be more differentiated in our context, for book or spirit is not an either-or-situation in Zion. Both take place with their prevalent gender casts. Some book religions have, albeit with a little assistance from the Enlightenment and other secular influences, liberated women from the yoke of sexism. Some spirit religions, and a few Zionist denominations from Malawi come to mind here, have not yet given much room to their ladies and remain androcentric. The liberation through the Spirit is momentarily as it only happens in the spiritual field. In our case, we have to wait if it will spill over into the structural domain.

⁸⁷ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990 p. 30.

⁸⁸ Matthew Schoffeleers, *Religion and the Dramatisation of Life*, Zomba: Kachere, 1997, p. 98.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Ioan M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, London: Penguin Books, n. d. pp. 113, 85.

⁹¹ James Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990 p. 10.

What place then do women have in Zion's structure? A woman, in traditional Ngoni society, was not allowed to tend cattle.⁹² "...when menstruating, their shadow alone sufficed to endanger the cattle."⁹³ Having been barred from pastoralism, becoming a pastor in a Ngoni dominated church seems a remoter possibility still. In some churches, for example in the Zion ya bata (2), the woman will rise in rank with her husband.⁹⁴ The wife cannot but be involved if her husband holds office in Zion. The *mvangeli*, for example, has to preach at funerals and he is responsible to place the body into the coffin. This duty falls to the *mvangeli's* wife if the deceased was a woman.⁹⁵ To be a *Mayi Mbusa* (the pastor's wife) is, in general in Malawian churches, already a title with authority and duties pertaining. With the Zionists, the seating order during services speaks volumes about the Who is Who in the congregation. The ladies usually sit according to their husbands' seniority. Striking is how the leaders of the Zion ya bata (2) honoured the widow of late Bishop Ng'ombe. Her house, the main church and the founder's mausoleum form a triangle. One cannot help but think that the Great Mother functions at least ideally, if not spiritually, as the guardian of the chief's spirit, a role which the Queen Mother in traditional Ngoni society fulfilled.⁹⁶ We witnessed an ordination in the CCACZ when General *Mlevi* Nyson Lisimba was elevated to the rank of vice bishop.⁹⁷ During the ceremony, his wife Aida sat by his side in front of the congregation; hands were laid on both, husband and wife.

But not all churches allow a woman such a prominent place beside her husband. Our interviewees stated sometimes emphatically that "*she does not rise in rank with her husband.*" Even without formal recognition, in our case the saying is true that "she will make him or break him." It would

⁹² Axel-Ivar Berglund, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989, p. 49.

⁹³ Donald R. Morris, *The Washing of the Spears*, London: Pimlico, 1994, p. 29.

⁹⁴ Int. Bishop Moffat P. Lichapa, Zion ya bata (2), Ntcheu, 14.10.2007.

⁹⁵ John Nindi, *Chirimba Christian Apostolic Church in Zion, Its Establishment, Organization and Beliefs*, Zomba: Kachere, 2006, p. 7.

⁹⁶ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 79.

⁹⁷ CCACZ, Namadingo, Zomba, 11.10.2009.

be nigh impossible for a man to rise in Zion's ranks if his wife had not supported and actively worked beside him throughout the years, especially as his chief recruiting evangelist. I have felt in all dealings with the Zionists that the ladies are of strong influence, although official structure may belittle the fact.

d. Men

Growing up as a Ngoni man at the beginning of the 20th century in central Malawi could well have instilled feelings of unmanliness. The military, religious and cultural defeat by the British and surrounding ethnic groups had shaken their identity to the core. Gone was the tradition of long houses, where the boys lived together and from where they eventually became drafted into regiments. Instead, Ngoni children now stayed with their parents and, increasingly, they joined Chewa initiation customs in the Nyau societies.

One reason why so many Maseko Ngoni went as migrant labourers must be seen in them adopting the area's Chewa custom by turning uxori-local. Contrary to the Ngoni in the North, the Maseko Ngoni moved to their wives' villages after the wedding, something not so common nowadays. Moreover, many of them married Chewa wives.⁹⁸ Upon divorce or her death, he normally would have to leave the place and return to his home. The saying goes, *Mkamwini sakula mwendo*, lit. "The son-in-law does not grow a leg," meaning that he cannot be established in his wife's village. *Kwanu nkwanu* is also uttered in this context, meaning that the son-in-law has a home, which is not his wife's. Things sometimes changed for the better as people got older. A husband, whose wife has died, and whose children are grown up and live at the same location, might be permitted to stay in the village. However, a new wife would not be welcomed at her predecessor's village, if the widower should decide to marry again. In 1956, the British administration tried to change all this

⁹⁸ This, of course, also had a reverse effect on the Chewa. Kings M. Phiri, "Some Changes in the Matrilineal Family System among the Chewa of Malawi since the Nineteenth Century," *The Journal of African History*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, vol. 24, pp. 257-274.

and legislated that “*the husband, on the wife’s death, or divorce to remain in the wife’s village and to retain ownership of houses built or trees planted...*”⁹⁹ It is, however, doubtful if such a paragraph was followed through in the villages. More than fifty years have passed and still, in the majority of cases, a divorced man or a widower will go to his home village.

Many migrant labourers left the country shortly after being married. They thus avoided the often difficult start in their wife’s village. As already mentioned, some ethnic groups in the country, the Chewa among them, held that no sexual intercourse should take place between the parents until the child is weaned.¹⁰⁰ The same applied to the Nguni from South Africa.¹⁰¹ This certainly came into consideration when the young husbands decided whether to sign up for a two year stint in the mines or to stay at ‘home’ with the in-laws. (In modern Chewa society, sexual abstinence after childbirth is further shortened by the authority of hospital recommendations [six weeks] or it is ignored altogether.)¹⁰²

Zionism came to Malawi through men. They found their faith far from their Malawian homes, in the absence of wives and families. The migrant labour system was a man’s world. The work at railroads, ports, mines and tunnels demanded raw physical strength. Compound life and the little entertainment built around it served the male clientel by offering cockfights, boxing and football. On the seamier side of it, the men were lured into gambling, crime and the red light district. Any religion on offer would have to specifically address male needs and problems. And how well Zionism fit in.

Becoming a *mtchona* by going abroad is in itself a rite of passage. Chapter 3 describes how many of Malawi’s young men went to the

⁹⁹ M.M. Bonga, “Local Administration in the Ncheu District with Special Reference to the Ncheu District Council,” Zomba: Chancellor College, History Department, History Seminar Paper 1972 – 3, p. 6.

¹⁰⁰ Johan W.M. van Breugel, *Chewa Traditional Religion*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2001, p. 204.

¹⁰¹ Donald R. Morris, *The Washing of the Spears. The Rise and Fall of the Zulu Nation*, London: Pimlico, 1994, p. 31.

¹⁰² Richard Gadama, Oral Presentation, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, Mzuzu University, 2010.

Rhodesias and to South Africa, and that some of them actually wanted to go. The sojourn itself formed a crisis, but the outcome was in many cases a changed or strengthened personal identity. Many went away as boys and came back as men. They were richer, both in material as well as in cultural possessions. Many smaller rites of passage were connected to this overarching migrant labour experience. Some were initiated before they went abroad; others hurried to get married or were baptized before the bus left.¹⁰³ Zionism waited on the other side, once the men had arrived in their compounds and had gotten settled in their work routine. Zion loomed large over this rite of passage as the offer of taking on a particular identity.

Churches reserve particular roles for their male members. Leadership in general is only for men, so is the distribution of the Lord's Supper, baptizing and preaching. Zionism, moreover, has features which attracted the *machona* to it in the first place and which, until today, give the churches a distinct male character.

I do not know any Christian church which is as physical in its regular worship as African Zionists are. By the end of *kubonga*, they are literally drenched in sweat. The only parallel that comes to mind are the whirling dervishes, Sufi Muslim ascetics. And their order is exclusively male.¹⁰⁴ With Zion, though both male and female members dance, the action is clearly on the men's side. One can see individuals whirling at stunning speed around their axis. Many of their dance moves copy warfare and combat steps. It's only boys and young men who beat the drums. The rest of the fanfare with horns, trumpets and cymbals is produced by men, too.

When Turner asked about the ruling features in African religious movements, he identified three different dominators: intellectual (rationalist and doctrinal), activist (social reforming, ritualistic) and

¹⁰³ Dawid Venter, ed., *Engaging Modernity*, Westport: Praeger, 2004, p. 181.

¹⁰⁴ Shakina Reinhertz, *Women Called to the Path of Rumi: The Way of the Whirling Dervish*, Prescott: Hohm Press, 2001. The description in this book is the exception that proves the rule: the order is closed to women.

emotional (enthusiastic and revivalistic).¹⁰⁵ Malawi's Zionists belong to the last group, of course. Yet the Ngoni of old were everything but emotional. They were poker-faced warriors with no room for pity nor any other sentimentalities. The men were traditionally not supposed to show any feelings in public.¹⁰⁶ The believers' dancing as a display of exuberance is therefore a decisive point of departure. Zion, in this way, spells emotional liberation to the men. It's not easy to be a "man man" without any means to vent anger or express joy. In Zion, the brothers laugh, panting with joy as they circle the holy ground. Upon approaching the spiritual field, some of them can be seen crying.

Healing is another area where the action is "from men to women." It's mostly women who come into the midst to receive healing prayers; in almost all instances the intercessors are men. This priestly role is open to all brothers in the church. It speaks volumes of the ideal man, which Zion envisions: he is in touch "*with the heaven*", as they say. Therefore he can bring healing, he cares, he cleanses from the "*pollution of violence*."¹⁰⁷

Such an ideal, however, is not easily arrived at. Two ritual avoidances govern the life of Zion's men, one of them intimate, the other public: sexual abstinence and beard shaving. For the first, all men officiating in the spiritual field in the areas of healing, blessing and preaching are required to abstain from sexual relations for a certain period prior to the event. The silent rule in the CCACZ, Lilongwe, is for someone to refrain for three days before the ordinance.¹⁰⁸ Stricter is the New Jerusalem Zion Church (19). Officiators are not allowed intercourse three days prior and three days after the healing service.¹⁰⁹ Abstinence prior to special functions is the rule in Malawi's youngest Zion church (30), too.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Harold W. Turner, "A Typology for African Religious Movements", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Leiden: Brill, 1967, vol. I, no. 1, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ Masiye Tembo, *Touched by His Grace*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005, p. 42.

¹⁰⁷ Steven Feierman, "Ethnographic Regions – Healing, Power and History", in: H. G. West, T. J. Luedke, eds., *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 190.

¹⁰⁸ Int. *Mlevi* Frackson N.J. Nawa and other leaders of the CCACZ, Joseph village, Chimutu, 14.5.2008.

¹⁰⁹ Int. Bishop Sporo Saguga, Liwiza Saguga, Jordan village, Ganya, 6.3.2008.

¹¹⁰ Int. General Overseer Thomas Mlangeni, Ndirande, 12.8.2007.

We are therefore dealing with a ritual avoidance, not a cultural taboo (the latter can be found in Malawian cultures but do not pertain directly to Zion). The avoidance therefore has to be interpreted in religious terms. Sexual intercourse is seen as something that defiles, even if it takes place within marriage. The fancy for everything Old Testament and Hebrew worldview has not yet changed their sentiment on the subject, instead



this seems to be an Augustinian legacy passed unto them, probably from the RCC and DRC, peppered with a tint of *peccatum originale*, which one can hear, too. The idea of sacrifice comes into play, too. One withdraws from earthly pleasure, pays the price for it, to gain something of eternal value. An ideal Zionist man can subject his sexuality to spiritual purposes. Considerations of child-spacing or the wife's health do not play a role in this.¹¹¹

Hair is universally associated with social status, rites of passage and sexual powers.¹¹² Ngoni traditions called for hair shaving, especially during rites of passage. A bald head is an indicator of ceremonial cleanliness. Contrary to the *Vapostoli*, Zion's men do not shave their head

¹¹¹ Etienne van den Walle, Francine van de Walle, *Postpartum Sexual Abstinence in Tropical Africa*, University of Pennsylvania, Population Studies Centre, 1989.

¹¹² Brian Morris, *Anthropological Studies of Religion*, Cambridge: University Press, 1987, p. 221.

as a religious rule.¹¹³ The *Vapostoli* believe that evil spirits can hide in the dreadlocks.¹¹⁴ Yet it is common in Malawian societies to carry out *limeto* (hair shaving) prior to a funeral and Zionist members observe this, too. (*Limeto*, not the term but the concept, was part of Hebrew culture and has its spiritual veracity there; Isa. 15:2.)

The beard is a different story. The CCACZ and the New Zion Church (15), for example, forbid their male members to shave their beards.¹¹⁵ They take the Levitical commandments from Lev. 19:27 and Numbers 6 literally. All other denominations encourage their men to observe the law and stay away from the razor. Male Zionists are therefore easily recognizable. Relatively few Malawians wear long, untrimmed beards. Often, when I asked such long-bearded strangers on the Malawian roads and markets, the answer was affirmative, they were praying at Zion.

When it comes to his faith, there is no hiding the fact for a Zionist man. On Sundays, he is seen in his robe, but the beard is to stay and serves as a marker, making his religious affiliation highly visible. Added is the prohibition for Zionists to wear a neck tie, which the CCACZ emphasizes.¹¹⁶ His outer appearance declares identity and marks boundaries. Morale is strengthened by their apparel. A man wanting to become a Zionist has to make a total decision; it is the ultimate choice. To some, such a step must have been a desperate leap out of a moral dilemma, finally turning his back on vices and other lurements 'of this world,' as they say. The uniform and the beard publicize this decision, leaving no space for a half-baked Christianity. A Zionist stigmatizes himself through his appearance. His disassociation with the world, while not physically withdrawn to some monastery, is almost complete through this outer image. This was to a good degree the answer to the temptations, which the *machona* faced in their milieu. It was and is

¹¹³ God's Message Apostle, *Church Constitution According to God's Will*, Blantyre: Jelusalem 20, A., Elijah Villa, n.d., p.2.

¹¹⁴ Matthew Engelke, *A Problem of Presence. Beyond Scripture in an African Church*, Berkeley: University of California, 2007, p. 123.

¹¹⁵ Int. *Mtsogoleri* Levison Chisamba, Yacobe Walasi, Lumbadzi, 28.4.2008.

¹¹⁶ Int. *Mlevi* Chimdipiti, CCACZ, Ulongwe, Balaka, 10.10.2009.

impossible for such a man to enter taverns or to be seen in gambling halls. As it stands, Zionists find themselves a minority in the country, both by their religious affiliation and their hairy looks. Long beards are not the fashion in Malawi, and so they express social peripherality, in the eyes of outsiders “*bizarre and untrimmed.*”¹¹⁷

Again, as with the purification ceremony of mothers after childbirth, we have a choice between Old Testament ceremonial law and African tradition as the source for these rituals. Authorization, if not inspiration for the bearded look might also have come by beholding a picture of J. A. Dowie in his priestly attire. Hastings describes a parallel situation in Kenya, whose explanation, in my eyes, points not only to the difference between tradition and the Bible, but also to the quest for a legitimate source of these customs:

Here too there is a frequent fusion between the taboos of African traditional custom and the taboos of the Old Testament, though again it has been noted for the Kikuyu Arathi, for instance, how in point of fact where the two differ, it is the Levitical rule, not Kikuyu tradition, which prevails.¹¹⁸

In conclusion, Zion provides men with different markers and expressions of male identity such as physical worship, spiritual conquest and an opportunity to rise in the hierarchy in an overall androcentric church. Yet Zionist men are subject to the discipline, which their church and their self-chosen status in society impose on them. They have dedicated their lives to spiritual service and a high moral standing, internally paid for by periods of sexual abstinence and outwardly signalled by their uniforms and beards. This self-chosen form of stigmatization safeguards them from social vices. In return, Zion draws men closer into their families.

¹¹⁷ Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 97.

¹¹⁸ Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa 1450-1950*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1996, p. 537.

e. Marriage

“Zionism is mainly a religion for the married,
in that it rewards the partners with a joint career.”¹¹⁹

Some aspects of marriage among Zionists have already been covered in the preceeding sections. We have seen how marriage is a vital part of rising in the church’s hierarchy; how some *mvangeli* and *mlaliki* depend upon their wives as chief recruiting agents. In Malawi, spouses usually pray at the same denomination; in most cases the wife joins her husband’s community of faith. The effect of a husband’s conversion has been described, leading in most cases to the wife joining Zion, too. Their faith provides moral safety to the Zionists, in a way of protection for the women and in a way of restraint to the men. It has also been mentioned how Zionists view contraception and how they tackle infertility within their health system.

What is left to say are the legal implications for Zionists regarding marriage. These pertain to three areas: marriage customs, polygamy and divorce.

Marriage is insofar endogamous as it is of prime importance to the believers that their young people marry within the Zionist camp. No small amount of pressure and preaching is applied should somebody cast an eye over an unbeliever. Yet the fact that young women, raised in Zion, marry unbelievers or adherents of the Muslim faith shows the possibility of an exogamous bond. Their humongous annual conferences also serve the purpose for young people to meet each other, with the chance of courtship in sight.

In this part of the world, a well-fixed marriage is always the link of two families, not just of the marriage partners.¹²⁰ The Ngoni custom of giving cattle in exchange for the bride, *lobola*, is part of a legal contract that binds two families to each other. *Lobola* insures patrilineal descent in

¹¹⁹ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990 p. 228.

¹²⁰ John A. Barnes, *The Fort Jameson Ngoni*, n. d., p. 228.

Ngoni society. The children stay with the father in case of the mother's death or divorce. If a man dies, in the past no uncommon fate in a warrior nation, the widow was given to the fallen man's brother.¹²¹ The Maseko Ngoni have a custom, which is similar to *lobola*, called *chiwongo*. It differs from *lobola* in that the *nkhoswe*, the mediator, talks to the village headman; it is not a direct negotiation between the families. *Chiwongo* is very much alive among the Zionists in Ntcheu. Other rites can be observed as well. The Apostolic Faith Church (7) allows its Maseko Ngoni members to marry according to traditional custom. One interesting aspect of the ceremony is the public display of all the bridegroom's household items under a tree, which happens a few days prior to the wedding. With this he proves his preparedness for domestic life.¹²²

It can happen that prophecy plays a role in the choice of a marriage partner. I sensed some caution when Mayi Mpatse talked about this. Apparently, someone too much in love tried to instrumentalize prophecy in order to win over someone's heart. As a rule, the CCACZ has more than one prophet looking into the matter, to see whether they confirm each other over the issue.¹²³

The wedding ceremony is usually held in the church. Members are married by bishop Saguga of the New Jerusalem Zion Church (19).¹²⁴ As seen in the picture, the custom of a white bridal dress has found its way into the churches, too. During the wedding ceremony, the couple is made to sit on a mat in the Good Samaritan Church (25). They first pray, followed by certain passages from the Bible read to them. They are declared husband and wife, although no formal vows have been exchanged.

Afterwards *perekani perekani* takes place. It's a joyful collection of money for the newlyweds, accompanied by music with show-offish

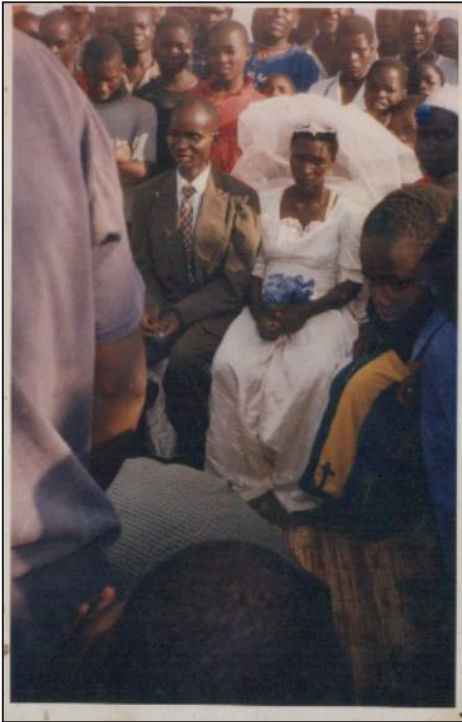
¹²¹ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 126.

¹²² Int. E.G. Zingwa naBengo, Bishop L.Z. Bengo, A. Julius, Dzipirana vlg., Ntcheu, 17, 18. 8. 2005.

¹²³ Int. Mayi Estere Mpatse, CCACZ, Ndirande, 29.6.2010.

¹²⁴ Int. Bishop Sporo Saguga, Liwiza Saguga, Jordan village, Ganya, 7.3.2008.

display of wealth and generosity. *Perekani* has become a countrywide custom, not stopping in front of Zion's gates.¹²⁵



Mr and Mrs Newa on their wedding day, Lilongwe, 18.10.2007. This was a Zionist wedding ceremony, officiated by *Mlevi* Mjomba. The people in the background wear Zionist gear.

Most churches have no problem to acknowledge a marriage tied according to traditional custom, especially if there are children. A church wedding is not required in this case, but blessings are given. We witnessed a ceremony of the CCACZ where couples were baptized. Husbands and wives were given a little talk after the ordinance and eventually a blessing for their union was bestowed upon them. With entry into Zion, their marriage had been sanctified.¹²⁶ In 'Western' Christianity, intercourse seals a marriage which had been earlier

officiated in church. Dare one say it, but in Africa, it is the birth of the firstborn that is regarded as the seal on the marriage.¹²⁷ Yet, as already mentioned, sterility does not annul a Zionist marriage.

All societies in Malawi and the Nguni from South Africa

¹²⁵ Int. Bishop Nikson Zalengera, Ndirande, 10.3.2009.

¹²⁶ CCACZ, Namadingo, Zomba, 10.10.2009.

¹²⁷ John V. Taylor, *The Primal Vision*, London: SCM Press, 1963, p. 111.

have practised polygyny. Having more than one wife is still a legal form of marriage in this country (In 2010, the government has come up with plans to ban polygamy. This has angered the Muslim community in the country.)¹²⁸ Polygamy was part of Ngoni society before the arrival of Christianity. The influence of the missions, notably Livingstonia in the north, strongly limited plural marriages. Livingstonia tackled warfaring first and that alone, with the demise of man-stealing customs, cut short the supply of additional wives.

Zionism in Malawi is inherently monogamous; the splits over the issue proof this all the more. Out of thirty denominations, two and a half are polygamous: the Entopia Zion Church of Ngwenyama (9), the Zion Christian Prophecy Church (11) and, allowing bigamy, the New Jerusalem Zion Church (10) of Bishop Ngulube. As the historical account in chapter 3 shows, all three denominations came out of the CCACZ. The New Jerusalem Zion Church (10) is also called *Ziyoni yodya mankwala ndi ya mitala* (Zion of taking medicine and polygamy). The Entopia Zion City Church (28) split from the Entopia Zion Church (9) on grounds of polygamy, in the year 1999. Late bishop Ngwenyama's nephew had taken a second wife in 1987, which led to a crisis within the leading family. The man was disciplined according to the church's rule, but his mother, the founder's sister, allowed him to keep the second wife and eventually had him reinstated to full membership. A huge part of the church then left and founded the Entopia Zion City Church (28).¹²⁹ The former church, however, seems to have opened itself to elements of African traditional religions, not just polygamy.

The same issue was part of a quarrel, which eventually gave birth to the Mpingo wa Atumwi (17), (*Church of the Apostles*), in 1974. Josamu Jede Masina was a Ngoni, born in 1934, and had prayed until 1968 in the CCACZ. That year, he was involved in a road accident and found himself half-dead in a bed at Zomba Central Hospital. None of his brothers and sisters from the church came to comfort him and a short while later the CCACZ excommunicated him because he had allowed secular medicine.

¹²⁸ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8654326.stm>. 5.5.2010.

¹²⁹ Int. Bishop S.F. Msalawatha, Mbemba, 13.5.2004.

His visitors at that time were the two leaders of Apostolic Faith Mission at Mazonda village, Ntcheu, Wakeford J. Hema and Raskell Chimpuza. Masina responded to so much mercy by becoming a member of the AFM in 1971. Alas, this fraternity soon broke up. Hema displayed some Zionist tendencies, which Chimpuza rejected. Wearing of robes could still be tolerated, but the church split apart after Hema had taken a second wife. All of this happened in one village, Mazonda, with most of the protagonists being neighbours. Masina then thought that it is wisest not to affiliate with any group and start something entirely new under a new name. He founded the *Mpingo wa Atumwi* in 1974. The Chewa name is an expression that this church has not been imported from abroad. The *atumwi*, apostles, are in this case not to be confused with the *Vapostoli* churches, e.g. of Maranke and Masowe. The name expresses the doctrinal elements of apostolic leadership, which Masina had experienced first in the CCACZ and later in the AFM.¹³⁰

The notion that marriage is a union between one man and one woman is a significant decision for an AIC. To arrive at such a decision will have had demanded a theological and ethical debate against the background of cultural and counselling issues. For Malawian Zionism, the time for such a debate and decision came in 1953. The mother church in Illinois did not approve plural marriages. The *machona*'s former churches in the country took a strong stand against it. Moreover, the Bible does not lend itself to polygamy. If one wants to make a case that the patriarchs had additional wives, then the account of their families' disharmony immediately throws a wet towel on such an assumption. It took however time for the churches to make their stand for monogamy explicit. The case of the Zion Christian Prophecy Church (11) shows that polygamy was practised among CCACZ members during the first and second generation in the country. The issue came on the table in 1953, when the Zionist churches in South Africa had a meeting in Cape Town. It is not known if a Malawian delegate was at the conference, but the decisions were communicated to the leaders in this country, with far reaching consequences.

¹³⁰ Int. Mlevi Dickson Chigona, Manja vlg., Ntcheu, 27.2.2006.

In Cape Town, on 12th March 1953, it was resolved that:

1. Marriage bonds entered into without proper customary and cultural arrangements shall not be regarded as legal, it shall be just as committing adultery.
2. Marriages shall have witnesses or go-betweens [ankhoswe], otherwise such marriages shall be taken as unlawful.
3. No one shall marry or taken into marriage while the other spouse is still alive or is not legally divorced.¹³¹

The third paragraph effectively ended any compromise with polygamists. The CCACZ in Malawi, leading all the other bigger denominations in the country, regarded the outcome of the conference as binding, but Bishop Hara in the north, together with his four wives, did not agree and so the Zion Christian Prophecy Church (11) was born. The source of this disagreement might have been an influence outside of original Zionism. It is on record that Hara had connections with Isaia Shembe's Nazareth church.¹³² Other churches take a stand similar to the CCACZ. The Apositoli Zion Sabbath Church (27) teaches its polygamous converts to leave their second wife (or subsequent wives) and keep only the first one.¹³³ One can hear that *mitala ndi chiwerewere*, "polygamy is fornication."

Polygamy is certainly not any longer the "*biggest mission problem*" as it was one hundred years ago when Zion came to South Africa.¹³⁴ Nowadays the question of polygamy is raised as a theological problem and for the sake of debate, not always as a reality and desperation that pervades Malawian church life everywhere. The Maranke *Vapostoli*, who allow plural marriage, count five polygamous households out of more

¹³¹ Int. Archbishop Stanley L. Hara, Archbishop McLeod T. Kacheche and Archbishop Paul S. Kapenga Hara, Mthebama headquarters, 13.7.2005.

¹³² Absalom Vilakazi, *Shembe, The Revitalization of African Society*, Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1986. Joseph C. Chakanza, *The Independent Alternative: A Historical Survey*, Zomba: Chancellor College, University of Malawi, 1981, p. 7.

¹³³ Int. Bishop Gresan Kamwendo, Ndirande, 12.11.2003.

¹³⁴ Bengt Sundkler, *Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists*, London: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 41.

than one hundred families in their community near Mzimba.¹³⁵ In general, men who want to have more than one wife can join churches that allow this. Those churches usually have “Abraham” or “Jacob” in their name. They do not belong to historical Zionism in the country.

Much counselling, dissuasion and even pressure from the church leaders will have occurred before a Zionist marriage ends in divorce. Apart from the personal tragedy, Zionists feel that their faith and church has been tarnished. Divorce is treated seriously in the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3). Adultery does not need to end in divorce, forgiveness and reconciliation is the first option. Persistent adulterers are excommunicated, while the betrayed partner still finds comfort within the church.¹³⁶ This does, however, point also into the opposite direction. Zion’s moral standards make divorce possible. In the olden days it was not possible for a woman to divorce her husband, although he could send her home.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, if a husband exhibits gross moral misconduct in a Zionist marriage, the church will side with the wife and divorce can be an option, albeit the last one.

A divorce will seriously hamper an ecclesiastic career within Zionism. In the New Jerusalem Zion Church (19), a Zionist aspiring to hold an office must be married.¹³⁸ A broken marriage can even spark the founding of a new Zionist denomination.¹³⁹ So it happened in 1994 in Blantyre when a bishop divorced his wife. The wife’s brother, who had risen to the rank of deacon in the church, sided with his sister, walked out of the church and started his own denomination, now known as the New Bible Zion Church (26).

Remarriage after divorce is permitted in the Apostolic Faith Church (7). Yet it has to be done carefully and never in a rush.¹⁴⁰ Widows and

¹³⁵ Lucy S. Banda, *The Masowe and Maranke Apostles in Malawi: Dynamics of the Entry, Growth, Development and Impact, 1950-2002*, MA, Zomba: University of Malawi, 2003, p. 53.

¹³⁶ Int. with the leaders of the HACZ, Bishop F.B. Chaluluka, Mrs. Chaluluka, General Levi L.N. Nkhoma, L. Mbewe, A.F. Sagona Chisale, Whwayo, 14.6.2003.

¹³⁷ John A. Barnes, *The Fort Jameson Ngoni*, n. d., p. 229.

¹³⁸ Int. *Mlevi* Salatieli Malopa, *Mlevi* Francis Nkhoma, M’gona, Lilongwe, 21.8.2007.

¹³⁹ Int. Archbishop Setifiketi Kanjere, Blantyre, 5.3.2004.

¹⁴⁰ Int. E.G. Zingwa naBengo, Bishop L.Z. Bengo, A. Julius, Dzpirana, Ntcheu, 17, 18. 8. 2005.

widowers are always allowed to remarry. The bishop of the CCACZ Southern Region, Thompson Gomeza, remarried after his first wife of thirty years passed away in 1998.

One of the following sections deals with economic issues among the believers. Before that, I would like to disclose a few facts about income sharing in Zionist households. The general situation in the country is that property between spouses is shared to a lesser degree than in European marriages. There is a stronger sense of 'what is mine;' some items, domestic animals and land will always be owned by the family that brought them into the marriage. I have witnessed a scene in Malawi, not among Zionists, where a couple had to move houses and I had offered transport to them. Before they entered my car, the wife dug up kitchen items, which she had hidden in the soil, lest her husband found out about those riches. Furthermore, there can be different streams of income in the family; sometimes partners do not share their income. In some cases a husband will not cut the pie with his wife and children. The situation is further aggravated by migrant labour both within and outside of Malawi's borders. One parent, usually the mother, remains on her own with the children bar any proper work and regular income. She will be at the mercy of timely rains for her harvest and depend on her in-laws otherwise. During the famine of 1949, many Ngoni men, who had married women from the south in and around Blantyre, went back to Ntcheu to find supplies and work. In some cases, this meant an additional source of income during the famine; in most cases, it posed as a heavy strain on the marriage.¹⁴¹ The women bear the brunt of this economic burden. "*a feminine pauperization underlies increasing global poverty.*"¹⁴²

Zionists struck me as rather open about this issue of income sharing and that they try to do something about it. Bishop Lichapa of the Zion ya bata Church (2) estimates that half of the men do not accord any cash to

¹⁴¹ Megan Vaughan, "Famine Analysis and Family Relations: Nyasaland in 1949", in: Steven Feierman, John M. Janzen, eds., *The Social Basis of Health & Healing in Africa*, Berkely: University of California, 1992, pp. 75.

¹⁴² Helen E.P. van Koevering, *Dancing their Dreams*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005, p. 102.

their families.¹⁴³ Eston Mlangeni, General Overseer of the Zion Church (30), thinks that 75% of all men do not share the money, and that most men do not ‘reveal’ to their wives how much they earn.¹⁴⁴ That husbands do not share their income with the family is, according to Bishop Zalengera of Samaria Zion Church (25), one reason why even Zionist marriages break up.¹⁴⁵ He shares his money with his wife Zione, and instructs his brothers to do likewise. In some local classes of the CCACZ, the leaders sit down and give their members an introductory course on how to deal with finances in the family. Part and parcel of this is how to plan a monthly family budget and how to share the husband’s and the wife’s income.¹⁴⁶ While the Zion ya bata (2) regards the income and domestic management of their members’ households as a private matter, they do counsel younger couples to share. *“They should prove that they are no longer two, but have become one.”*¹⁴⁷

f. Death, Funeral and the Hereafter

“Of all sources of religion, the supreme and final crisis of life – death –
is of the greatest importance.”¹⁴⁸

As recorded, Zion’s health system bids mothers to give birth at home. The believers prefer the same location when it comes to the end of their lives. Zionists usually die at home or in a healing room attached to the church. Even the majority of members of churches that approve biomedicine will not end their lives in a hospital ward, since medical facilities are usually a long way off, therapy is unaffordable or the physical condition is beyond hope for recovery. The healing room thus turns into a hospice. Any anointing with oil or sprinkling with water is still done for the sake of

¹⁴³ Int. Bishop Moffat P. Lichapa, Ntcheu, 14.10.2007.

¹⁴⁴ Int. General Overseer Thomas Mlangeni, Ndirande, 12.8.2007.

¹⁴⁵ Int. Nikson Zalengera Chawango, Manjawira, 14.10.2007.

¹⁴⁶ Int. *M/levi* Frackson N.J. Newa and other leaders of the CCACZ, Joseph village, Chimutu, 14.5.2008.

¹⁴⁷ Int. Bishop Thomas Kayenda, Msangu, 28.7.2007.

¹⁴⁸ Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion*, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984, p. 29.

healing, not as an extreme unction. Yet death has its own sobriety. All faith proclamations and healing prayers cease once the leaders realize that there is no hope left and that death is immanent.

The churches recognize the death of any member who has been in good standing with the local congregation. Contrary to the Watchman Healing Mission, Zionists regard babies, who have died before their purification ceremony, as sinless.¹⁴⁹ They are buried with Christian rites, for example in the Entopia Zion Church (14).¹⁵⁰ Members under discipline and those who had refrained from visiting the services for a longer time may not be given a church funeral.¹⁵¹ Some denominations will not bury members who had taken refuge in biomedicine.¹⁵²

Zionists funeral rites are in some aspects distinctively different from customs prevailing in Malawian society. Most striking is the mood. Usually, people are sad, shocked and expected to show their grief. Zionists might sing and dance at the funeral, depending, of course, whether it was a natural or sudden death and depending on the age of the departed. Any expression of cheeriness goes against the grain of their own healing theology, which should see every death spelling defeat, and against their traditional upbringing, for the Ngoni were not allowed to show any sign of emotion at a funeral.¹⁵³ Funerals are the most public events in the Malawian countryside. The decisive element of etiquette is presence. No one is supposed to be absent, lest suspicion arise, even about a possible involvement in the death. The community draws together, thus seeing it through this crisis. Such a gathering provides a ready stage for the Zionists. Their faith is on the line. Believers will rather display triumphalism than disheartenment. They use their songs, sermons

¹⁴⁹ Nelson J.A. Chikometsa, *Death Rites in African Instituted Churches: The Watchman Healing Mission and the Restoration Church*, Zomba: Kachere, Kachere Documents no. 42, 2006, p. 4.

¹⁵⁰ Int. Archbishop S. Kanjere; Bishop Rex Ligopolo; Collin Gwirize; Mrs. Marigeni Nangodzo; Mrs. Chrisy Ligopolo, Mwansambo, 25.2.2010.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Int. Mayi Falesi Wilson Mtokoma; Mr. Paulo Nyamulani, Mr. Amosi Chibani, HACZ (3), Whwayo, 10.03.2010

¹⁵³ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 71.

and demeanor to make an impression on their neighbours, the relatives and village dignitaries. If possible, the deceased's life will lend itself as a role model and moralizing addresses will be built around it. Preaching takes place in front of the house and at the graveyard. An elderly Pentecostal pastor once told me that it takes the ability to conduct proper funerals for a church to grow in Malawi. This sounded hyperbolic, yet there is a kernel of truth in it. Related are personal reasons, too. The church provides for the funeral, even if there is no family left to do so. This kind of spiritual and social reassurance attracts people to Zion. Sundkler gives an example from South Africa, where a woman who had borne no sons (to bury her) joined Zion in order to have that issue taken care of.¹⁵⁴

People in general refrain from sexual relations during the mourning period (*kukhudza maliro*) and the Zionists follow this, too. Emphasis is put on *everybody* abstaining; the taboo again seeks to draw the community closer together.¹⁵⁵ It is reinforced with foreboding consequences. Intercourse during mourning is believed to cause particular curses and ills, e.g. diarrhea and tuberculosis. This misfortune because of the taboo's breach is called *tsempho* in Chinyanja. Normal conjugal relations are resumed when elders declare the mourning period over.

All funeral functions are carried out by the church. Family members who are not Zionists respect this and seek to cooperate with the church leaders. Everybody will take his shoes off in the house of the departed. The body is washed by deacons or *akokeri* of the same sex as the deceased; in some churches, this rite has to be performed by members of the same rank as the departed. Zionists are never cremated, but buried in a coffin. The corpse will be dressed in his robe or the robe is laid into the coffin. Leaders are given their staff and there is one case on record where a believer's rope was tied around the cross on top of his grave, upon request of the departed.¹⁵⁶ The corpse usually lies in state in the house

¹⁵⁴ Bengt Sundkler, *Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists*, London: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 268.

¹⁵⁵ Int. *Mlevi* Thomas T.W. Kayenda, Msangu, 28.7.2007.

¹⁵⁶ Int. Mayi Estere Mpatse, CCACZ, Ndirande, 10.3.2010.

where the believers hold vigil through the night. More relatives and church members arrive during this time. Food is provided for everyone, again strengthening the communal bond. Typical Zion hymns are sung throughout the night, interspersed with prayers and lamentations (they are free to lament as long as they are out of the public eye). The first song mentioned below is sung when the body is placed into the coffin and later when it is lowered into the grave. The second song is intoned when the procession leaves the house for the graveyard.

Malo alimo m'nyumba ya Yesu

Looowa, looowa, looowa

tsopano loowatu¹⁵⁷

Mongatu Yesu, mongatu Yesu,

ndikhale monga lye,

pa ulendo wonse wonka Kumwamba,

ndikhale monga lye.

There is a place in
Jesus' house

Enter, enter, enter
enter now

Truly like Jesus,
truly like Jesus,

may I be like Him
on the whole
journey to Heaven,
may I be like Him.

When they leave the house, it can happen that Zionists start dancing while carrying the coffin, something in stark contrast to common convention in the country – probably to any country!

Members of the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3) sometimes follow a custom with traditional origin. The Chewa used to reserve the door of the house for the living and transported the corpse on the last journey through a hole in the wall, made especially for that purpose. This unique exit is in the back wall of the house, exactly opposite to the main entrance. Van Breugel describes this, but says he has personally never witnessed it.¹⁵⁸ Neither have I, but some holes I saw in houses in the Central Region made me wonder if the custom has really become extinct. Superstition fears that the corpse might turn into a hyena if transported

¹⁵⁷ From the CCAP song book *Nyimbo za Nkhoma*.

¹⁵⁸ Johan W.M. van Breugel, *Chewa Traditional Religion*, Blantyre: CLAIM, Kachere, 2001, p. 107.

through the main door.¹⁵⁹ The believers of the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3), however, still practice a toned down version of this. Mrs. Chaluluka said that if there is *“something wrong”* with the deceased, then *“we transport the body through the window.”*¹⁶⁰ Something wrong, or something fishy, indicates either doubts about a sufficiently sanctified life style or allegations about the true cause of the death.

The procession moves to the graveyard. In the Ifa-ifa Zion Church (4), those walking in front of the coffin must wear white robes.¹⁶¹ Some denominations have their own final resting places close to the main church; the graveyard of the Zion ya bata (2) at Mount Zion near Salima



Bishop Nwa preaches at the open grave. Funeral service on the 12th of Sep. 2009 for Mrs. NN at Dzoole village, chief Nkhukula, Dowa district.

has a central place in the village. Other churches bury their dead in the village graveyard. Bishop Josamu Jede Masina, who founded the Mpingo

¹⁵⁹ Int. Bishop P. E. Makoko, Kaluzi, 28.2.2006.

¹⁶⁰ Int. Mrs. F. Chaluluka, Rev. R. L. Gama, Rev. L. Mbewe, Rev. P. Makanani, Whwayo, 6.11.2005.

¹⁶¹ Int. Daniel Sitima, Harod Kaphalanya, Mkukula, Dowa, 6.10.2008.

wa Atumwi (17) in 1974 at Mazonda village, Ntcheu, was buried right in front of his church. His members said that he deserved this honour, for “*he had done so much for our church.*”¹⁶² Zionists might delegate the task of grave digging. Nowadays in Malawi, there are groups called ‘Chipani chokumba manda’ (The party of grave diggers), that have taken over the family task of preparing the last resting place. They are officially not paid, but provided with food, all in a bit of Hamletian fashion.

The Ngoni clan of Mtumba bury their departed with the head facing west, while the M’gabe clan’s dead face north.¹⁶³ Both clans live in Ntcheu district. The Zionists, however, do not follow any symbolic direction when placing the corpse in the grave. Still practiced in Malawi is a special way the grave is dug. It is believed that witches can resurrect a body by sprinkling some magic potion onto the grave. Provision against this is made by a special excavation on the bottom of the grave, dug like a little cave wherein the body is laid, not any longer in vertical line with the grave’s surface. The evil liquid will thus miss the corpse. When asked about this custom, Mrs. Feresi Chaluluka, widow of Bishop Chaluluka (3) and one of the oldest members of the church in Malawi, stated that the occurrence is rare, but, “*Yes, such things can be found in Zion, too.*”¹⁶⁴

Other things cannot be found. Bishop Makoko (15) explained how even nowadays the Ngoni bury some of their dead with the intestines of a cow wrapped around the corpse’s head. It’s understood to be a sign of life since the Nguni held the ancestral spirits to be residing in the intestines of cattle, especially in the cow’s gall bladder. Leaders of the Mpingo wa Atumwi (17)¹⁶⁵ and the New Zion Church (15) abhor such a rite and stated that it has no place among Zionists.¹⁶⁶ Royal people are still buried seated among the Ngoni.¹⁶⁷ For this, the grave is dug very deep and the coffin, which has a cupboard shape, with a little seat for the

¹⁶² Int. *Mlevi* Dickson Chigona, Manja vlg., Ntcheu, 27.2.2006.

¹⁶³ Int. *Mlevi* Dickson Chigona, Manja vlg., Ntcheu, 27.2.2006.

¹⁶⁴ Int. Mrs. F. Chaluluka, Rev. R. L. Gama, Rev. L. Mbewe, Rev. P. Makanani, Whwayo, 6.11.2005.

¹⁶⁵ Int. Bishop P.E. Makoko, Kaluzi, 28.2.2006.

¹⁶⁶ Int. *Mlevi* Dickson Chigona, Manja vlg., Ntcheu, 27.2.2006.

¹⁶⁷ Int. Bishop P.E. Makoko, Kaluzi, 28.2.2006.

corpse, is lowered into it. Commoners are certainly not buried in such a fashion but Chief Mbelwa was laid to rest in this way, wrapped in cowhide in October 2006. Throughout the research I came only upon one funeral where the corpse was buried in a seating position, and this was not a Zionist. Raskell Chimpuza was one of the local leaders of the AFM church in Mazonda village, Ntcheu. He was a Maseko Ngoni who passed away in 1976. Interestingly, “*his family buried him upright; the church had no say over it.*”¹⁶⁸ This clearly points to the fact that the church has never accepted such a funeral rite, but family and tradition had the upper hand. Malawi’s Zionists differ in this from their brothers and sisters in the region, for Zionists in South Africa follow this Nguni custom. For example Isaac Shembe had written in his rules and regulations for funerals that no member is to be laid in a coffin held together by nails. Metal fastenings would form a serious obstacle when the final trumpet will sound for the resurrection of the dead.¹⁶⁹ Shembe himself was wrapped in cowhide and buried in a sitting position, like an *inkhosi*.

Zion’s Eschatology

Perhaps even more traditions come to the fore once the departed has been buried. Zionism is free of most of them. Post-burial customs are many in Malawi; here the churches differ even more from commonly held customs due to their eschatological beliefs. The term *kusonjola* depicts the practise of grave inspection two or three days after the funeral to see if it has been tampered with. This is not done in the Zion ya bata Church (2).¹⁷⁰ Grave or tomb sweeping customs are not taking place among the Zionists.

What can be found are memorial services and purification ceremonies for those who had been in touch with the corpse. In the CCACZ near Lilongwe, they have a little ceremony thirty days from the date of death. It is held only for faithful members, “*to those who have contributed a lot*

¹⁶⁸ Int. Mlevi Dickson Chigona, Manja vlg., Ntcheu, 27.2.2006.

¹⁶⁹ Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 94.

¹⁷⁰ Int. Bishop Moffat P. Lichapa, Zion ya Bata (2), Ntcheu, 14.10.2007.

to the church.”¹⁷¹ They are adamant that this has nothing to do with ‘laying the spirit to rest.’ The Zion ya bata (2) has an annual ceremony called *Kukumbukira Imfa ya Azineneri* (Commemoration of the Prophets’ Departing), held always on the 17th of August. Members from all local assemblies in Malawi and Mozambique go on pilgrimage to the Zion headquarters near Salima. The memorial service is a solemn occasion; everybody is supposed to look perturbed. Departed leaders are remembered according to their ranks. The final words uttered are always, “*May their Souls rest in Peace.*”¹⁷² Church members who had washed the body need to be sprinkled with holy water to wash away the defilement of death. If parents have lost a son or daughter, then the church elders of the Zion ya bata (2) will come seven days after the funeral and sprinkle them with holy water. The earlier contact with the corpse had made them ritually unclean. After this, the couple is declared clean.¹⁷³ The beraved family is given water to drink in the Good Samaritan Church (25). “*This means that we have tathana nayo, munthu wakufa* (we are through with the dead person), *there is nothing we do with a dead person after that.*”¹⁷⁴

Zion’s eschatology forbids them to influence, contact or guide the spirits of the departed. Their confidence in the salvation event prevents them from fears that witches could tamper with the corpse. Grave inspections are seen as manifested doubts about the resurrection.¹⁷⁵ They believe that death is the final curtain, both spiritually and physically. A person’s salvation cannot be influenced once he has arrived in the afterlife. An often heard phrase among the Zionists in Malawi and in Zimbabwe is ‘the Heavens.’ It refers in general to the Hereafter, sometimes to God. Engelke says that the word *heaven* came into use

¹⁷¹ Int. *Mlevi* Frackson N.J. Nawa and other leaders of the CCACZ, Joseph village, Chimutu, 14.5.2008.

¹⁷² Int. *Mlevi* Thomas T.W. Kayenda, Msangu, 28.7.2007.

¹⁷³ Int. Bishop Moffat P. Lichapa, Zion ya Bata (2), Ntcheu, 14.10.2007.

¹⁷⁴ Int. Bishop Nikson Zalengera, Ndirande, 15.3.2009.

¹⁷⁵ Nelson J.A. Chikometsa, *Death Rites in African Instituted Churches: The Watchman Healing Mission and the Restoration Church*, Zomba: Kachere, Kachere Documents no. 42, 2006, p. 8.

among Shona speakers by the missionaries working in Zimbabwe.¹⁷⁶ It connotes the difference between the Christian and the traditional worldview. In the Christian teaching, the realm of spiritual beings, the Heavens, is where God and the angels reside. A Zionist can be in touch with the Heavens by entering the spiritual field. The shades, ancestral spirits, do not yet belong to the Heavens; they are waiting for the final resurrection. In eschatological terms we could say that Zionists are not contacting their ancestors because the latter are not yet *there*.

Archbishop Kanjere of the Entopia Zion Church (14) outlined to us in broad strokes his view of eschatological events. It is representative for all Zionist churches in the country:

Our church believes in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to this earth. He is coming to rapture the saints to Heaven. Then later on Jesus will come once more, that time with His saints to rule the earth for eternity. We believe in the resurrection of the righteous dead. Hell and heaven are real, physical places. The devil and his messengers will be cast into the bottomless pit for eternity.¹⁷⁷

This doctrine reflects Dowie's legacy, Pentecostal influences, which in turn go back to Adventist roots. During the first generation, Zion certainly had increased bouts of millennialism, congruent with other African Instituted Churches, Evangelical churches and the political seedbed for it in the country. This has waned. The battlecry that "Jesus is coming back soon" cannot be heard so often. One reason is that Zion as such is apolitical to some degree, as we will see in a following section. (Having said that, millennialism does *not only* thrive on political conditions, it is a spiritual stronghold, too.) Another reason can be found in a post-exilic settlement like Mount Zion near Salima, which presents an already

¹⁷⁶ Matthew Engelke, *A Problem of Presence. Beyond Scripture in an African Church*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007, pp. 95f.

¹⁷⁷ Int. Archbishop S. Kanjere, Entopia Zion Church, Mwansambo, Chileka, 22.6.2005.

realized eschaton. Smaller rural havens provoke similar evocations.¹⁷⁸ Sickness is the crisis of the eschaton on this side of heaven, the biggest spanner in all of Zion's works.

But death is not. Through their grief, the Zionists understand the final cut to be already on the other side of their existence. In comparison to the wider Malawian society, Zionists view death not so much as part of life, but as already belonging to their ethereal existence. Their songs express this, too. Death is another form of healing, redemption from sickness, which ushers them into a glorious hereafter. That death turns into triumph is probably the most distinguishing marker of the Christian faith,¹⁷⁹ and Malawi's Zionists actually show this belief, which indeed has an unbroken historical line since the resurrection of Christ. This interpretation allows them, in front of a village community that is oftentimes bewildered at the scene, to carry the coffin to its final resting place – dancing.

g. Conclusion: Culture and Rites of Passage in the Churches

“Ritual is not a reaction to life; it is a reaction to what
thought has made of life.”¹⁸⁰

This chapter has described cultural elements among the Zionists. Their way of life is at the edge of Malawian main-stream; comprised of and carefully blended by traditional, Biblical and denominational elements. The different rituals, customs and relationships are like dots, which I will try to connect now in order to paint a fuller portrait of Zionist culture.

From the cradle to the grave, Zion's rituals cover the human experience. The pattern of ritual accompaniment can be found in their

¹⁷⁸ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol. 2, The Hague: Mouton, 1974, p. 331.

¹⁷⁹ Fenella Cannell, *The Anthropology of Christianity*, Durham: Duke University, 2007, p. 13.

¹⁸⁰ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Naked Man*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1981, p. 681.

African background as well as in their Jewish example. All rituals have a spiritual dimension; most of them have physical and psychological implications as well. Take for example the purification ceremony for parents who have lost their child. One week after the burial, holy water is sprinkled on father and mother. This will not only ritually expiate the defilement, which was caused by touching the corpse; it will also wash part of the pain away and help to draw a curtain over the trauma. With many layers of meaning, rituals, in the end, “...have the function of celebrating the transcendence of the whole over the part.”¹⁸¹

The spiritual journey of a Zionist has parallels to and is enmeshed with the traditional notion of becoming a complete human being. To begin with, many Zionist founders came to their faith in a modern rite of passage, during their stint as migrant labourers. Moreover, a Zionist will find his human destiny by adhering to the regulations which his church has set out for him.¹⁸² Ritual serves to subject himself from time to time to these requirements; on the other hand his community affirms his identity by performing ritual acts on him.

In this way, being a Christian has more African overtones in Zionism as compared to Pentecostalism and the majority of other, older Christian churches in the country. Pentecostals do not practise the purification ceremony; initiation ceremonies are shunned in most of their churches. From an African perspective, these churches do not come full circle. Zion leaves very little room for a believer to be ‘served’ with traditional rites. They fill the emotional and cultural vacuum, which other churches try to restore by a very conscious project called inculturation. In which area, may I ask, would a Zionist church feel the need to be inculturated?

All rites of passage have been carefully selected. Out went the medicine-man who held the newborn over smoke to dispel evil spirits, in came the purification ceremony according to the book of Leviticus. Initiation camps could not be found in Ngoni culture, but they have been adapted from the Chewa because their effects are in line with the moral

¹⁸¹ Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 153.

¹⁸² Efoé J. Pénoukou, “Christology in the Village”, in: Robert J. Schreiter, ed., *Faces of Jesus in Africa*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991, p. 34.

requirements of the Law. The Levitical Law or at least the spirit of the Law is the common dominator in this traditioning process.

We have studied the role of the Law of Israel already in connection with the salvation event in the preceding chapter and how it gives a legalistic tinge to their faith. From the current perspective, we find that the Law also serves as a cultural pattern, an ideal to live by. The two should be distinguished, something H.W. Turner did not do, although he was the first to describe the “Hebraist element” among AICs.¹⁸³ Culture is, according to Geertz, not so much a fixed set of customs, traditions and habits, but their cause: plans, rules and instructions that govern our behaviour.¹⁸⁴ In our case, the Law of Israel is the ideal which the Zionists unquestioningly aspire to. To them, the Ten Commandments are not only prohibitions; they have a prophetic dimension as well, giving rise and guiding cultural elements. Hebrew grammar supports this. The language is void of a future tense, yet it is expressed indirectly. “Do not steal” can therefore be read as “You shall not steal” meaning “You will not steal.” Two main sources empower the believer to live up to this ideal. His mystic encounters in the spiritual field renew commitment. And the fellowship with his brothers and sisters keeps him in line with their common values.

Rituals serve to bring this ideal, their worldview, into harmony with their ethos. Their rites of passage comprise a palpable and emotional avenue to actually experience and express the cultural ideal – and to bring it about in many cases. What Geertz said about culture has been paralleled by Levi-Strauss’ definition of ritual: “*It [ritual] is not a direct response to the world, or even to experience of the world, it is a response to the way man thinks of the world.*”¹⁸⁵ This is true on all counts with the Zionists. Their healing practices exemplify it clearly. With health as their ideal (which the Hebrew concept of *shalom* encompasses), they will try to restore it in manifold ways and through oftentimes desperate attempts. Their rites are the stick that holds the carrot.

¹⁸³ Harold W. Turner, “A Typology for African Religious Movements”, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Leiden: Brill, Andrew F. Walls, ed., 1967, vol. I, no. 1, pp. 1-34.

¹⁸⁴ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, 2001, p. 44.

¹⁸⁵ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Naked Man*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1981, p. 681.

Zion's culture is a spiritual and social ideal which is constantly pursued through rites of passage, healing ministrations and evangelistic efforts. Their traditioning, religious innovation and all prophetic elements in the church forbid us to see them as a mere reflection of social life. That much has been said by Eller: "*Thus, religion reflects the on-the-ground realities of social life.*"¹⁸⁶ Douglas' social definition of religion as being "*not a compensation, but a fair representation of the social reality they experience*" is too static to fit here.¹⁸⁷ Douglas did her field work among the Lele, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This ethnic group was rather isolated from other cultures and their traditional religion had experienced very little outside influence over the centuries. AICs and Pentecostalism, however, do not sit still to have their portrait painted. I doubt whether the theory of religion as representation of social life is applicable to any AIC or Pentecostal church. Zionism was too mobile, both physically and spiritually, for us to ask the question: Who came first, the hen or the egg? There were, at least during the *mfecane* and the first generation of Zionism in the country, exactly the era in which their religious culture was formed, too many eggs around. For groups in exile, religion can never be a representation of social reality. Out of exile, prophetic and revivalistic influences will try to hinder a religion to become a representation of social reality. Zion's exilic roots and spiritual restlessness do not allow it to be a mere mirror of the status quo. It takes a lot for an African ethnic group to adopt a foreign cultural ideal. This dynamism has been brought about by their eventful history which saw their military power and culture thrive during the conquests, only to wane and dissipate in the end. I described a Malawian *mtchona* in chapter 3 who learned his parent's language (Chingoni/Zulu) from the Zionists in South Africa. He stated that Zionism became his culture. Yet "compensation" is not the right word for the process and any deprivation theory is at its best a negative explanation for the *growth of a culture* which is inherently positive and constructive. We are witnessing more than a cultural restoration. It is a very creative religious process, with the

¹⁸⁶ Jack D. Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion*, New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 22.

¹⁸⁷ Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 89.

main actors carefully choosing and discriminating elements from a wide range of traditional, religious and cultural repertoires.

Although this study is a “thick description” that tries to include as many details of culture and religion as possible, the core of the matter is not what we see and hear in their services. To really understand the Zionists, we have to ask what made them choose one element of culture over another. Why do they discriminate certain religious elements and why could they, in case of the initiation camps, choose a concept foreign to both their religious and cultural roots? The answers to these questions have already been given. Over and sometimes against all prophetic activity, above sudden outbursts of inspiration, opposed to megalomaniac leadership aspirations and contrary to certain traditional notions, Malawi’s Zionists have chosen the Bible as their guide. They consult the Word of God on all important decisions and try to emanate Old Testament Hebrew culture as much as possible.

The real surprise is that they have adopted both, the *worldview* of the ancient Jews as well as the pre-exile *culture* of the children of Israel. Such a combination is rather unique in worldwide Christianity, apart from AICs with similar Hebraist tendencies. While Hebrew worldview is accepted as standard by most Christian churches on doctrinal lines, only few groups seek identification with the Old Testament Jews as such. British Israelism is based on the assumption that there is direct lineal descent from the Jews of old to the inhabitants of the British Isles. I know of Finnish Christians who claim that their nation’s ethnicity goes back to one of the lost tribes of Israel. Such a wishful identification is, however, not amplified by them donning robes or wearing long beards. Other groups, many of them Charismatic in Europe and the USA, have a spiritual affiliation to the modern state of Israel, for evangelistic reasons, too. Zionists differ from all these groups and notions. They became “Israelites” in a cultural way because their exilic experiences created a void, which the Old Testament way of life could partially fill. “*The word view is made*

*emotionally acceptable by being presented as an image of an actual state of affairs of which such a way of life is an authentic expression.”*¹⁸⁸

2. Outer Circle: The Zionists’ Relation to Society

“Man does not have a given relationship to the world.
He must ongoingly establish a relationship with it.”¹⁸⁹

a. Economy

“Only the poor man has a rich god.”¹⁹⁰

In a country, which is ranked among the poorest in the world, Malawi’s Zionists are furthermore at the lower end of income.¹⁹¹ Most of them belong to ‘the rural poor.’ Many are maize farmers, while the women run little tuck shops on the verandas of their houses, selling tomatoes, charcoal and bananas. Some of them keep cattle, yet three cows, a small fortune in the countryside, is the most we counted during our visits. This came as a surprise, since the Ngoni have a strong affinity for cows. Their traditional religion is intrinsically linked to cattle: they believed that the ancestors reside in the cow, precisely in the animal’s gall bladder.¹⁹² Certain behavioural signs were interpreted as messages from the shades.¹⁹³ They preferred to be buried near the kraal, wrapped in cow hide.¹⁹⁴ Cattle, the more the better, provided a sense and status of wealth, the ability to employ and material security in times of need. In Whwayo, headquarters of the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3), we found

¹⁸⁸ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, 2001, p. 127.

¹⁸⁹ Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, New York: Random House, 1990, p. 5.

¹⁹⁰ Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, New York: Harper, 1957, p. 73.

¹⁹¹ In 2009, Malawi was ranked no. 160 out of 182 countries surveyed by the UN under the Human Development Report. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics>. 10.5.2010.

¹⁹² Axel-Ivar Berglund, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989, p. 110.

¹⁹³ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 178.

¹⁹⁴ Margaret Read, *Children of their Fathers*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968, p. 35.

the church, bishop's house and kraal forming a triangle around the congregation's *bwalo*. Yet I doubt any ritual significance in this. And there were only three animals in the kraal.

Zionists working in town will opt for a profession which will allow them the least amount of interaction with non-believers. It is perhaps for this reason that many are tailors, sewing away on their foot-pedaled machines all day by themselves. A good number of tin smiths worship in Zion, hammering buckets and bowls from the metal. Others guard houses in town at night, cycling back to their rural home every morning. We never saw a member come to the church by car in all the services visited.

Data collected in South Africa and Mozambique, shows the Zionists in a similar economic situation. On a list of sixteen religious groups, Jews were the most affluent people in South Africa, followed by members of the DRC, Hervormde Kerk, Hinduism and Islam.¹⁹⁵ Members of the South African Zion Christian Church (8) ranked lowest on the list, earning on average only 15% of the Jews' monthly income. Research findings from Mozambique¹⁹⁶ and Zimbabwe¹⁹⁷ confirm Zionists to be among the poorest of the poor in those countries, too.

How much does their faith impact on this economic predicament? Three teachings take prominence among Malawian Christians, explaining, motivating or soothing their economic dreams and aspirations. First, one can hear a '*blessed poverty*' being proclaimed. The poor are seen as being closer to God. They have overcome the enticement of earthly possessions, concentrating their lives on spiritual values. Shoring up riches is seen as a futile endeavour. Being wealthy means that something is *wrong*, or, to be precise, that somebody has been wronged. On average, every fourth Malawian is a member of the Roman Catholic Church and has been influenced in this way. 'Blessed poverty' is preached in the RCC and lived in their mendicant orders in the country (although

¹⁹⁵ Dawid Venter, ed., *Engaging Modernity*, Westport: Praeger, 2004, p. 29.

¹⁹⁶ G. Seibert, "But the Manifestation", in: E. Morier-Genoud, D. Péclard, eds., *Le Fait Missionnaire*, Lausanne: UNIL, vol. 17, 2005, p. 141.

¹⁹⁷ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol. 2, The Hague: Mouton, 1974, pp 56f, 61, 64.

the church itself and many of its members are not poor). Other churches teach this too, in good Puritan tradition. The Puritans thought that riches are too big a temptation and so they upheld poverty as an ideal.¹⁹⁸

On the other side of the extreme is the so-called 'prosperity preaching.' Wealth is not only seen as a blessing from on high. Someone is not really in touch with God if he remains poor. God is seen as a benevolent giver, who wants his children to be famously rich. It is mainly the younger neo-Pentecostal churches in the country who offer this kind of 'gospel.' They are influenced by TV preachers from overseas who explain the road to riches as a spiritual exercise. One becomes affluent by faith and by following the right principles which they proclaim. It is no wonder that such a proclamation tickles the ears of the impoverished masses in our townships. These preachers ring a bell, which the older churches have not yet found.

A third way is not a teaching as such but comes from observing the economic impact of conversion over three generations. '*Social lift*' is, according to Wagner, the result of applied Christian ethics: on average, a Christian will be more honest and work harder than unbelievers.¹⁹⁹ This will lead to promotion, owning a home, acquisition of land or even the start of one's own company. Taking Pentecostals as his study objects, Wagner shows that the majority of believers came from the working class in the first generation, that they were able to afford better education for their children, resulting in the third generation being firmly established in the upper ranks of society's middle class. A generalization it certainly is, but I would confirm *social lift* from my own observation among German, Finish and Malawian Pentecostals.

Zionists do not subscribe to a prosperity gospel, neither do they sanction blatant capitalism. Contrary to Protestant work ethic, they are deeply suspicious about the accumulation of wealth. This is one reason

¹⁹⁸ Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie I*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1988, p. 199.

¹⁹⁹ C.P. Wagner, "A Church Growth Perspective on Pentecostal Missions," in: M. Dempster, B.D. Klaus, D. Petersen, eds., *Called and Empowered. Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective*, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991, p. 280.

why the Apostolic Faith Church (7) forbids its members to lend or borrow money.²⁰⁰ Current Malawian status symbols, such as cars, are ridiculed in their sermons. Moreover, they are appalled by people making money in the name of religion. One stated her opinion clearly, “...people today who own orphanages or charity organizations do it for their personal gain and not for the sake of love.”²⁰¹

Neither has *social lift* taken place among them. The reasons for this are spiritual, embedded in their religion, as well as infrastructural, conditioned by their rural remoteness with difficult access to education, markets and production sites. Spiritual reasons challenge the faith of the average Zionist farmer to the core. The official line in the CCACZ is that fertilizer is not allowed on a believer’s maize field. This prohibition, together with the ban on secular medicine, ended the budding life of two classes in Mkwanda and Mtengule in Machinga district. The new converts did not put up with the restrictions and Zionism was uprooted in the area.²⁰² Regular fertilizer is not made from organic substances, so the Zionists see it as something unnatural. It is *mankhwala* (medicine). Moreover, most products are imported into Malawi from wealthier industrial nations. Fertilizer is thus a double interference from the outside; something that goes against the grain of Zion’s reclusiveness. However, the prohibition is seen as outdated, even in the CCACZ, and nowadays the majority of believers use it on their fields.²⁰³

To the individual believer, becoming rich is almost impossible. Believers prefer to be among themselves; they do not easily socialize with outsiders. As a rule, they do not trust unbelieving business partners, although trust is a vital ingredient in any economy.²⁰⁴ What is left as an economic network is either the family or, as we have seen, colonies like

²⁰⁰ Int. E.G. Zingwa naBengo, Bishop L.Z. Bengo, A. Julius, Dzipirana, Ntcheu, 17, 18. 8. 2005.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Int. *Mlevi* Chimdipiti, CCACZ, Ulongwe, Balaka, 10.10.2009.

²⁰³ Int. Mayi Estere Mpatse, CCACZ, Ndirande, 29.6.2010.

²⁰⁴ Sharon Allen, *The New ROE: Return On Ethics*.

<http://www.forbes.com/2009/07/21/business-culture-corporate-citizenship-leadership-ethics.html>. 18.2.2010.

Mt. Zion near Salima. The Zionists' economic networks are all *organic*, they have developed naturally or are inherited; they are full of linkages, cemented by family, culture and religion. *Strategic* networks, on the other hand, are consciously developed, market-oriented and an indispensable access to the big money.²⁰⁵ So even if a Zionist would be on the make, his rootedness in the family and church, coupled with pollution beliefs regarding unbelievers, fertilizer and business suits naturally hinder him to become well-heeled. Another reason is the time which a fully committed Zionist spends in corporate worship, council meetings and for conferences. Zionists who are economically ambitious may find it necessary to leave their church, as some South African believers have indeed admitted.²⁰⁶ Even so, they would not leave their family, which is still the most determining economic factor in this part of Africa:

The extended family may be an economic help or hindrance, an unsurpassed business resource or a constant drain, leaching away the profits of the small business, preventing the accumulation of capital and expansion, or even the mere survival of the business."²⁰⁷

Because of "us" one does not get rich. On the other hand the "us" will help every individual out of dire needs. This corresponds to the wider cultural setting that determines the tension between individualism and collectivism. Geert Hofstede's index factor for individualism in East Africa (data from Kenya, Tanzania, Ehtiopia and Zambia) is 27. This means that in our region, in worldwide comparison, people are from birth onward placed into strong in-groups, which will protect each individual in

²⁰⁵ Gilian Godsell, "Religious and Familial Networks as Entrepreneurial Resources in South Africa", in: Sharon K. Houseknecht, Jerry G. Pankhurst, eds., *Family, Religion and Social Change in Diverse Societies*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 207f.

²⁰⁶ Matthias Mohr, *Negotiating the Boundary: The Response of KwaMashu Zionists to a Volatile Political Climate*, PhD, Durban: University of Natal, 1993.

²⁰⁷ Gilian Godsell, "Religious and Familial Networks as Entrepreneurial Resources in South Africa", in: Sharon K. Houseknecht, Jerry G. Pankhurst, eds., *Family, Religion and Social Change in Diverse Societies*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 220.

exchange for unquestioned loyalty. Cultures that expect individuals to look more after themselves are wealthier. In comparison to East Africa, the USA scored almost 90 on the index factor.²⁰⁸

One looks in vain for elaborate social projects among the Zionists. No four-colour print leaflet with a stunning presentation of the church's good works will greet the visitor at any congregation in Malawi. Yet Zionists are one of the most social religious groups that I have ever come across. There is such a strong group-consciousness, connectedness and mutual care, which oftentimes excels the support that an individual receives from his family. Zionists of one class will not let their fellow brother or sister down. Member care is provided by spontaneous collections or hand-outs in emergency cases. Moreover, the churches run a special social fund for their most needy members. The Zion ya bata (2) has an emergency fund, called *Thumba Ladzidzidzi* (lit. the sudden bag), which helps those who have been robbed. It also assists with funeral costs.²⁰⁹ In the New Jerusalem Church (19) there is a *Thumba la Ufulu*, a fund which is, as the name says, for voluntary giving. Some members in the church keep orphans permanently, helping a society that is overburdened with children having lost their parents.²¹⁰ (Malawi's population stood at over 13 Million in 2009. 70% of the population is under 15 years old; 1.1 Million children are orphans, about half of them due to the AIDS pandemic.²¹¹) And so it goes on with different funds in different denominations, all designed to ease the financial burdens of their members. In Africa, hunger is not so much a matter of availability or absence of food, but of food entitlement.²¹² Through Zion membership, the poor become entitled to something; a treasure which they very much cherish. Church membership, however, is the first and foremost requirement for access to any fund. A member of the ZCC (8) in South

²⁰⁸ http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede_dimensions.php. 22.5.2010.

²⁰⁹ Int. *Mlevi* Thomas T.W. Kayenda, Msangu, 28.7.2007.

²¹⁰ Int. *Mlevi* Salatiele Malope, *Mlevi* Francis Nkhoma, M'gona, Lilongwe, 19.8.2007.

²¹¹ http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/malawi_statistics.html. 20.10.2009.

²¹² Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay of Entitlement and Deprivation*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981.

Africa has to meet nineteen additional conditions before he can benefit from the *Kganya Burial Fund*.²¹³

What emerges is (not unlike Zion's health philosophy) an economic system, whose shortcomings are put up with as long as it provides independence, is self-contained and allows as little ritual pollution through unbelievers as possible. The men prefer fellow believers as trade partners. The sisters run their tuck shops and try to do business mainly with other Zionists. The colony near Salima provides the believers with plenty of business opportunities simply because more believers are resident in the area. Profits will eventually flow back into the infrastructure of the settlement and into the church. This is in line with observations from black entrepreneurship in South Africa. "...*business does not provide its own legitimacy; the legitimacy must come from what the business does for the community*."²¹⁴ Israelites do not leave the camp. Going to the city or even making the long journey to Joni (Johannesburg) in order to earn a better living is despised and frowned upon. Zionists are exponents of a *blessed poverty*, yet the term has to be more qualified. It is not the poverty that is blessed, but their coherence as a group, which wealth generated from the outside could seriously threaten. It's a systemic question. They do not want to join money-making schemes for fear of too much interference from the 'world.' A German saying goes, '*Geld regiert die Welt*' (lit. Money rules the world, engl. Money makes the world go round). The US Americans talk of the 'almighty dollar.' To the Zionists, money has this stigma of a foreign intruder, like a strange medicine, and is looked upon as a necessary evil. This is certainly one reason why Zion's leaders do not receive a salary in cash or cheque, for it would put them into a different system. Contrary to the Pentecostals and Charismatics, who increasingly thrive on all kinds of tithe, offering and money-collecting schemes, Zionists do not tithe; neither do they pay salaries to their office bearers. All fifty leaders of Chipiliro Zion Church

²¹³ Int. Minister M'gomezulu, Chilobwe, 29.6.2003.

²¹⁴ Gilian Godsell, "Religious and Familial Networks as Entrepreneurial Resources in South Africa", in: Sharon K. Houseknecht, Jerry G. Pankhurst, eds., *Family, Religion and Social Change in Diverse Societies*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 218.

(12) are non-salaried. Bishop Kanjere (14) is a tailor by profession. The church only gives him money when he travels long distance to Mozambique. Bishop Chisale of the Mpingo wa Atumwi (17) earns his dough as a bricklayer. He visits the churches after he will have earned enough money to finance his itinerary. Zionists do look down on churches that are, in their eyes, set up like money-making machines. Pastors and self-appointed bishops, who depend on a cash income from their congregation, have lost prestige in their eyes. There is an older, traditional notion here where “*prestige matters more than money.*”²¹⁵ Prestige comes from not joining the rat race, like the old Ngoni diviner, who “*was not the sort of man who desired to be wealthy.*”²¹⁶ Zionists are not poor because they cannot think otherwise. Their economic level is a preference. This is more than a generalization, since the majority of them have opted to shun the city and stay in their rural havens. All sociological explanations that people become Christians in order to improve their material lot will not hold true for Malawi’s Zionists.

b. Education and Theological Training

Our contact with hundreds of Zionists showed that only one of them had a *Malawi School Certificate of Education*, the highest qualification of secondary education in the country.²¹⁷ There might be more among them, but not many. We met no Zionist in Malawi who has gone to university. On the count of English as a social divide in the country, the Zionists will again score low marks.²¹⁸ Only a few bishops and hardly any member spoke conversational English. This will automatically bar them from employment in the banking sector, from university studies and the teaching profession. Their stand against biomedicine will not see any medical doctors coming from their ranks and many Malawian girls, who dream about becoming a nurse one day, cannot pursue this while their churches strongly object to hospitals and medical treatment. Girls are in

²¹⁵ Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets of South Africa*, London: Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 126.

²¹⁶ Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 189.

general married at a young age in the countryside. Their education cannot improve as long as the churches tolerate or even encourage this custom.²¹⁹

We counted literacy rates in seven congregations visited during the Sunday worship.²²⁰ On average, 77% of all members were able to read and write. The figure is a little above the national average (72%), especially for the countryside.²²¹ Illiteracy is not caused by their religion; they are Bible-believing folks. The preaching style requires much reading and worn out Bibles can be seen in their houses and churches. Their low education and economic situation have similar structural causes: Zionists are oftentimes too far from centers of learning and educational resources. While a good number of Zionists do not want to be rich, education is increasingly seen as something valuable. The Zion Church (30) provides learning classes for their members after the service, when members help others to learn how to read and write.²²²

Yet their reclusiveness comes to the fore when theological education is concerned. Leaders in general do not believe in academic and intramural training for their clergy. Bishop Dzonzi, reflecting the opinion of many others, said that Chipiliro Zion Church (12) does not train their leaders; it is God's work to do so.²²³ Still echoing the early pentecostalic dislike for institutionalized theology, they claim the Holy Spirit as their sole and sufficient teacher and 1.John 2:27 is quoted on every occasion ("*and you*

²¹⁷ Mlevi Thomas Kayenda of the CCACZ. Lucy Banda lists another man with MSCE who was a member in Zion but now worships with the *Vapostoli* of Johane Maranke in Kasungu, Lucy S. Banda, *The Masowe and Maranke Apostles in Malawi: Dynamics of the Entry, Growth, Development and Impact, 1950-2002*, MA, Zomba: University of Malawi, 2003, p. 104.

²¹⁸ Edrinnie Kayambazinthu, *Patterns of Language Use in Malawi*, PhD, La Trobe University, 1994.

²¹⁹ Janet W. Jere, *African Instituted Churches and Schooling: The Masowe Apostles at Mpondabwino, Zomba*, BTh, Zomba: Chancellor College, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, 2002.

²²⁰ In two different classes of the CCACZ and churches no. 2, 4, 19, 25 and 30.

²²¹ http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/malawi_statistics.html. 3.6.2010.

²²² Int. General Overseer Thomas Mlangeni, Ndirande, 12.8.2007.

²²³ Int. Bishop L. Dzonzi, Blantyre, 2.7.2003.

*have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things...”). Wacker writes about this, “Still, the principal reason was the supposition that the Bible’s words explained themselves. All they needed was a good set of eyes, an open mind, and a willing heart.”*²²⁴ Mainline Pentecostal churches in Malawi have come a long way since their original rejection of academic learning. Zionists still reflect this.

Two exceptions are notable. Young men from the CCACZ, the HACZ (3) and the Zion Church (30) were sponsored to study at the *Evangelical Bible College of Malawi* in Blantyre during the 1990s and early 2000s.²²⁵ Funds came from a link between South African missionaries and the mother church in Zion, Illinois, which I will describe later. It is the nostalgic connection with the church in Zion, Illinois, which influenced the bishops to give a nod of approval for the undertaking. What has not happened is that these former students now sit in leadership positions in the churches. One graduate thought of himself so much that he tried to overthrow his bishop. Such incidents do not endear theological training to the leadership.²²⁶ Nikolas Zalengera, founder and bishop of the Samaria Zion Church (25) became a student at the International Bible College Berea in Ndirande, which is a Pentecostal institute affiliated with the AFM in Malawi. In this case, the conflict over theological training was not between the generations in the church, but first of all in the bishop himself and, after he had completed the 2-year course, between Zalengera and his fellow leaders.²²⁷ He seems to weather the storm. According to him, the training enabled him to have a christocentric faith and to teach the church in a more systematic way.

Instead of formal training, many bishops instruct their fellow leaders. This happens during the conferences, when times are set aside for

²²⁴ Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003, p. 76.

²²⁵ Conversation with Megumi Fazakerley, who served as principal at the college when the Zionists studied there. 25.4. 2008, Mchiru. The first five leaders to be trained were: Rev. J.S.Njewa, Mchinji; Rev. B.F. Tembwe, Nthenje; Mr. T. Chesa, Lilongwe; Mr. Chipapi, Blantyre and Bishop M.P. Lichapa, Ntcheu.

²²⁶ Int. General Overseer Thomas Mlangeni, Ndirande, 12.8.2007.

²²⁷ Int. Nikson Zalengera, Ndirande, 15.3.2009.

teaching. Bishop Kayange of the CCACZ used to train aspiring *alevi* for three weeks at headquarters.²²⁸

c. Political Involvement

“Later he thanked God that he had never been elected mayor. His reason is telling: ‘The devil tried to get me deeper into politics.’”²²⁹

We witnessed the *deremani ceremony* of the local CCACZ at Namadingo (Zomba district) on Sunday, 9th of November 2009. Since Friday a string of events had been happening in the church. Some representatives of the national leadership were there; baptisms and *ziwasheni* took place, they celebrated the Lord’s Supper during the night and ordained three leaders to higher rank.

On Sunday morning, everybody filed in line; they started dancing in good Zionist style and slowly made their way to the *bwalo* of the group village headman Bimbi.²³⁰ The procession and presentation in front of the chief is called *deremani*. It is a Zulu term meaning *courtesy call*. Upon arrival, group village headman Bimbi was sitting in his chair on the verandah with his wife beside him. The dust settled after a few *kubonga* dances and the preacher asked someone to read from 2. Kings 4:26: “*Please run now to meet her and say to her, ‘Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?’” And she answered, “It is well.”* The verse is part of the prophet Elisha’s story, when a woman, who had lost her son, came to him for help in her distress. The reader continued with verse 27: “*When she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught hold of his feet. And Gehazi came near to push her away; but*

²²⁸ Joseph C. Chakanza, *An Annotated List of African Instituted Church 1900 – 1981*, Zomba: Sources for the Study of Religion in Malawi, no. 10, 1983, see church no. 52.

²²⁹ Clyde Baily, a Pentecostal, who briefly served as police chief of Marion, Illinois, in the late 1920s. Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003, p. 220.

²³⁰ He is not the same chief, neither is it the same location as described in James N. Amanze, *African Traditional Religion in Malawi, The Case of the Bimbi Cult*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2002.

the man of God said, "Let her alone, for her soul is troubled within her; and the LORD has hidden it from me and has not told me." Having read this, four young men suddenly burst from the ranks, ran to chief Bimbi and touched his feet. The words were repeated, *"Let her alone, for her soul is troubled within her."* After this dramatic introduction, the speaker had everyone's attention and delivered his message. It is the church that is so distressed in this village. He said in a loud voice, *"the church has a complaint to make to the traditional leader because many people are dying in this village, they are dying in sins."* He then asked the reader to quote Hosea 4:1, *"The Lord has a charge to bring against you who in this land."* And he continued, *"The Lord has a charge to bring against you people living in this Bimbi village because in this area people are dying of HIV/AIDS, plenty of thieves, witchcrafts, boys and girls committing adultery, married people leaving their spouses going about with other people's wives."* The second preacher continued in the same vein by speaking from Nehemiah 2:2; *"So the king asked me, 'Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill?' Why should my face not look sad when my city where my parents are buried lies in ruins?"* And he applied this to the situation in the village, *"Why should my face not look sad when people in this area live sinful lives, why should you, village headman Bimbi not look sad when your people are dying in sins?"* Then came a second time for *kubonga* and they danced before the chief. The third preacher followed, reading from Romans 1:16 and interpreting: The Zionists are not ashamed of the gospel because they know it is the power of God for salvation. This done, they gave the village headman the chance to say something. His address was rather abridged: *"I am very happy to see you here at my headquarters. I encourage you to continue preaching the gospel."* In his reply, vice-bishop Nyson Lisimba said he was also very happy with the traditional leader because of his kindness by allowing them to visit and dance before him. Not every chief allows them to do this. This marked the end of *deremani*; the believers went back to church dancing and rejoicing.

The *deremani* ceremony is one example that a political “*apathy*” could not be found in Malawi.²³¹ To say that Zionists are apolitical has become a truism in the literature about the South African churches, yet it will not stand scrutiny in this country. (Neither does it hold true for South Africa in my opinion. It is not apolitical when a South African Zionist says, “*So instead of fighting, we’d rather pray.*”²³² It means that the cause is taken into a different arena, but it is not dropped.)

There is a range of thirty denominations in Malawi. They exercise political involvement to different degrees.

On a national level, Zionists are least involved and will shun activism. *Ndale* is the Chinyanja word for politics connoting something negative. It literally describes a root sticking out of the soil; it is *chokhumudwitsa*, something that makes you stumble. Bishop Zalengera expresses his reservations about national politics, a sentiment which is shared by most leaders in Zion. “*I am not interested in politics. That is a religion. In our religion, we pray to Jesus Christ. But in the religion of politics, they try to turn the people away from Christ.*”²³³ Churches are indeed indifferent to the hype that surrounds countrywide elections. The Zion ya bata (2) does not allow any political party to become active in their settlement. Members can discuss politics, but no party campaign or any display of political alliance is tolerated.²³⁴ There is, to the best of my knowledge, only one country where Zionism is a national political force: Swaziland. There they “*regard Swaziland itself as their Zion,*” which comes naturally with forty percent of the population worshipping in a Zionist church.²³⁵ The ZCC (8) has millions of followers in South Africa, yet its impact is strongest in the northern provinces, not nationwide.

²³¹ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990 p. 33.

²³² B. Nozipo as quoted in: Linda E. Thomas, *Under the Canopy*, Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1999, p. 61.

²³³ Int. Bishop Nikson Zalengera, (25), Ndirande, 15.3.2009.

²³⁴ Int. *Mlevi* Thomas T.W. Kayenda, Msangu, 28.7.2007.

²³⁵ Paul Cummergen, “Zionism and Politics in Swaziland”, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Leiden: Brill, 2000, vol. 30, no. 3, p. 375.

Zion's interaction with rural and local government is a different story. Churches and chiefs work with separate mechanisms, yet ultimately they both have the welfare of the people in mind. Zionists understand this common goal and have accepted chiefs and politicians as a force to reckon with.

I have a good relationship with our chiefs. In our area, I chat with all of them. Some of them have repented, too. It has happened that we have prayed the whole night through and then in the morning we went and excused to the chief for the disturbance. But, instead, some chiefs were very touched and repented.²³⁶

Problems arise when Zion's leaders notice that secular authorities are not serving the community as they should. Furthermore, chiefs are officiating at traditional religious functions; something many Zionists can only tolerate from afar. This conflict between churches and the spiritual implications of traditional office are common to many churches in the country. For example, the Achewa Providence Industrial Mission does not accept Chewa chiefs as church members, "*since Chewa chiefs are installed under the banner of Gule Wamkulu.*"²³⁷ To some Zionists, it is impossible to be a believer and a chief at the same time: "*Chiefs are welcome to give their lives to Christ and upon doing so, they have to renounce all pagan beliefs and customs pertaining to their office.*"²³⁸

K. Kalombola was the village headman at the settlement that bears his name near Chileka, Blantyre. Until 1988 Kalombola was a member of the Entopia Zion Church (14). He was installed that year as Ngoni chief after his uncle had passed away. According to Kalombola, his then bishop Kanjere had him excommunicated because he does not believe that the two responsibilities of traditional and spiritual leadership can go hand in

²³⁶ Int. Niksoni Zalengera, Ndirande, 15.3.2009.

²³⁷ Hany Longwe, *Identity by Dissociation: The First Group to Secede from Chilembwe's Church: A History of Peter Kalemba and the Achewa Providence Industrial Mission*, MA, Zomba: University of Malawi, 2000, p. 144.

²³⁸ Int. *Mlevi* Thomas T.W. Kayenda, Msangu, 28.7.2007.

hand.²³⁹ (Kanjere, however, denies this. Indeed, he is against a member of his church becoming a traditional leader, but remembers that Kalombola had left his flock before he became village headman.)²⁴⁰ Initially Kalombola had not been sure about his political career. Perhaps the archbishop was right, and he could not be a Zionist and a chief at the same time?

Then I started reading the Bible on the subject. And everywhere it was written, 'And the Lord spoke to the king' and other things about how the rulers of Israel were used by the Lord. So I found my answer and accepted the chieftainship.²⁴¹

Kalombola found a new spiritual home with A.Y. Kaleke at the Sinai Zion Church (21) and succeeded as leader of that church after Kaleke had died.²⁴²



Kalombola passed away, too, on Friday, 27th of October 2006 and was laid to rest the following day (*the picture shows him and his wife on the 21.4.2005 at their home*).

The Zion ya bata Church (2) found its own solution to the problem. E. N. Ng'ombe functioned as spiritual head as well as local chief over the settlement near Salima. People came to settle at Mount Zion for religious

²³⁹ Matthew Schoffeleers, *River of Blood*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992, p. 67.

²⁴⁰ Int. Archbishop S. Kanjere, Entopia Zion Church, Mwansambo vlg., Chileka, 22.6.2005.

²⁴¹ Int. Bishop K. Kalombola, Blantyre, 13.4.2004.

²⁴² Int. Bishop K. Kalombola, Blantyre, 13.4.2004.

reasons, but the colony needed to be administered politically, too. In this case, the secular office developed out of Ng'ombe's spiritual status. Such an arrangement reduced the tensions between political and ecclesiastic spheres, of course, and safeguarded the ritual purity of their land.²⁴³ Moreover, it strengthened their stand against the government, as described earlier, when it came to the vaccination issue. Health related issues again hold the largest potential for conflict in this regard. Zionists comply with government regulations and are, as such, good citizens. Biomedicine and vaccinations are a case where the believers feel compelled "*to obey God rather than men;*" Acts 5:22.

Our next task is to look at Zionism under the three political dispensations the country has seen since the first *machona* arrived here, namely colonialism, the Banda regime and, since 1994, the current exercise in democracy.

The churches were birthed during the colonial regime, which lasted until 1966. The Chilembwe Rising in 1915 set the stage for all government dealings with 'native sects,' as they were called. British inspectors and commissioners, local residents and the police were on high alert regarding AICs that could turn into political cells. Zion arrived on the scene only seven years after Chilembwe, with Genesis Mbedza and friends in 1922. They had to tread very carefully. The administration of Nyasaland took a similar attitude toward the Zionist churches as their colleagues in South Africa: a church had to be registered to enjoy peace and certain privileges, but at the same time they raised the stakes too high. It virtually became impossible to meet the conditions for registration. One day a white policeman visited Bishop Kanjere and threatened his arrest if the Entopia Zion Church (14) continues to gather without proper papers. Kanjere did not manage to register the church and he lost some sleep over this. He felt to be entirely at the mercy of the whites as long as he could not meet their demands. Moreover, the government wanted Entopia Zion to pay taxes, but Kanjere refused to do

²⁴³ Int. *Mlevi* Thomas T.W. Kayenda, Msangu, 28.7.2007.

so. There were no consequences because later, in the 1960s, the rulers had more urgent fires to quench.²⁴⁴

Truth to tell, there were two opposing sides in the political struggle, one black, one white - and Zionists were definitely not on the white side. Over the years, Malawians (re)-gained their political consciousness and subsequently tried to shake off the yoke of their overlords. We have a shocking statement from a white Zionists on record, seeking to comply with the government of the day in South Africa.

We wait the time [sic!] when we shall be granted the opportunity to prove to your government the aim and object [sic!] of our zeal for the natives of South Africa... We desire only to defend the good name of our organisation and aid the officials of Anglo-Saxon Governments, to control with authority the native and bid him attain to a place of usefulness, as a servant people.²⁴⁵

It would be impossible for a black person to write such a statement. Zionists were not on the white side of the struggle, but neither were they involved in active political conspiracy to overthrow the government in Malawi. If there was any thought of it, then it was much more subtle than outward political protest or activism. The British kept good record of things. But there is nothing in the NAM, and only a hint on Zionists in connection with the unrestful Wilfrid Gudu opposing state conservation measures in the 1930s. It can, however, only be assumed and not proven, that Gudu derived his land ownership ideas from Zionists.²⁴⁶ During the inter-war period, 1919-1939, forces were at work which made the African people believe that the European led churches were a government agency. Education had become the prime evangelistic method in the 'mainline' churches. Such a concentration naturally left other works

²⁴⁴ Int. Archbishop S. Kanjere, Mwansambo, Chileka, 23.4.2005.

²⁴⁵ Letter from Van Buren Shumaker to the Chief Native Commissioner of Rhodesia, 16.2.1929, Harare: National Archive of Zimbabwe, File S 84/A/264.

²⁴⁶ Wapulumuka O. Mulwafu, "The Interface of Christianity and Conservation in Colonial Malawi, c. 1850-1930", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Leiden: Brill, 2004, vol. 34, p. 312.

undone, to such an extent that the church's essential functions had become marginalized. Sundkler gives an example of a church, where only six men were engaged in church-work proper, while all others were on the pay roll of the Educational Department.²⁴⁷ From an African perspective, this arrangement made the churches look like government collaborators. Clergy received government grants and wages, they adapted their curricula to the administration's educational policy and were supervised by government inspectors. It all looked as if the churches had lost their own standing, not to speak of their lack to address the spiritual needs of the people.²⁴⁸ Ranger concludes that indeed the church failed to distinguish itself from the Government in Southern Rhodesia.²⁴⁹

I would interpret adherence to Zionism as a form of non-compliance; it was an act of silent resistance during British rule.²⁵⁰ The reasons why Malawians became Zionists are altogether non-political. (In this, the facts, or at least my interpretation of them, differ from the South African scene.) Nevertheless, once baptized, church membership in an AIC said as much as not conforming to a European form of Christianity, which was seen as a form of tacit compliance with the rulers. (There were others, ideologically led by W.E.B. DuBois and enlisted in the Ethiopian Churches, who saw compliance with the Europeans, down to their manners and dress-codes, as the first step to gain equality). By their conscious traditioning, the Zionists chose their form of Christianity, which is free from foreign missionary elements. Churches that do not make a complete break with their cultural roots have been interpreted as a critique of colonialism.²⁵¹

The exception to the rule is called Morris Anderson Gomani Chikuse, whom we have met briefly in chapter 3 under the tutelage of the CCACZ. As the name says, he was of royal blood, a grandson of the paramount

²⁴⁷ Bengt Sundkler, *The Christian Ministry in Africa*, London: SCM Press, 1960, pp. 93-97.

²⁴⁸ Terence O. Ranger, *State and Church in Southern Rhodesia, 1919-1939*, Harare: Historical Association of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, n.d., pp. 7f.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 27.

²⁵⁰ Linda E. Thomas, *Under the Canopy*, Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1999, p. 121.

²⁵¹ Olivia Harris, "Christianity in Highland Bolivia", in: Fenella Cannell, ed., *The Anthropology of Christianity*, Durham: Duke University, 2007, p. 69.

Inkhosi Gomani Chikuse. Morris did not inherit the Maseko sceptre; he only ruled as a local chief. Being both a Zionist and a chief proved quite a challenge to him during the transition from British rule to independence.²⁵² As a chief, Chikuse sided with the British – like so many chiefs had done.²⁵³ As a Zionists, he was against the rhetoric of violence coming from the Malawi Congress Party in 1958. Furthermore, he refused to buy the MCP party cards because he did not want to financially support the ‘rebellion’ against a government, which he saw as rightfully installed under God.²⁵⁴ In turn, the local government official in Ntcheu provided him with three guns for personal safety reasons. Chikuse went to prison after the MCP had come to power, but was released a week later. The reason for his liberty is to be seen in the fact that he was much more a Zionist than a political activist. And he proved to be so until his death in 2006, building up strong classes for the CCACZ around Balaka.

Like the Israelites in the Old Testament, the Ngoni invaded a land, conquered it only to lose it in the end. Zion had two ready answers to the conflict over land during this era. First, the *machona* had retreated to the Malawian hinterland. Still today, the denominations’ headquarters are usually in remote rural places, hard to find and difficult to reach. They are far from major roads, plantation sites, army barracks and the larger cities. In short, Zionism had physically withdrawn from places where colonialists and the population interacted. Land, already in biblical times, could be seen as polluted, Amos 8:17. Such a view entails a string of taboos with ensuing rituals. The Zion Church (30) uses a flag to protect against evils.²⁵⁵ It flutters above their places of worship. In the Samaria Zion Church (25) they cast ashes into the air, believing that this will chase evil spirits from the place of worship.²⁵⁶ The Malawian churches still found their space,

²⁵² Int. James Chinguluwe Phiri, Zagwazatha M’gwagwa Chikuse (younger brother to Morris), Tchona village, chief Nsamala, Balaka, 4.6.2008.

²⁵³ Desmond D. Phiri, *History of Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM, 2004, pp. 230, 240,

²⁵⁴ Int. Moses A. Chimbetete with Jessie Chikuse (older sister to Morris), James Chinguluwe Phiri (current leader at Govati), Govati, 31.3.2006.

²⁵⁵ Int. Thomas Mlangeni, National General Secretary, Zion Church (30), Ndirande, 12.8.2007.

²⁵⁶ Int. Nikson Zalengera, Samaria Zion Church (25), Manjawila, 14.10.2007.

contrary to South African Zionists, where they could roam and dance freely. In some instances they made use of sacred places which had already been in use before Ngoni conquered the land, although they had to be cleansed from ritual defilement. Two of those places will be described in the following section about traditional religions. To sum it up, Zionists require space for the exercise of their religion and they were able to find it in Malawi during colonial times.²⁵⁷ To explain the rise of Zionism as a reaction to “*progressive theft of land from the African population*” is at least an insufficient explanation for South Africa and it would be an erroneous analysis for the Malawian churches.²⁵⁸

The other solution to the loss of land ownership is spiritual. The Zionists transfer themselves back into the period of Old Testament conquests. In the spirit, they yet own the land. They preach enthusiastically about Joshua’s battles and they call Malawi’s streamlets and hills with names from the Bible. Such a mental escape can be noticed especially among worshippers who live in the cities’ crowded townships, like the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3) at Mbayani and the ZCC (8) in Ndirande. In this way, the Zionists put on a different identity; they validated it in front of the ‘world’ and especially the then British rulers over the land. At least mentally, they were liberated long before the colonizers left.²⁵⁹

Chief Njolomole from Ntcheu district was seen as a backward ruler by the administration in the beginning of the 20th century. He and chief Masasa remained sub-native authorities, while other chiefs in the district were promoted.²⁶⁰ Many Zionists have their cradle at Njolomole, for example the CCACZ and the Chipiriro Zion Church (12). A pattern emerges

²⁵⁷ Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets of South Africa*, London: Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 158.

²⁵⁸ Robert Garner, “The Future of African Independent Churches in South Africa,” in: Dawid Venter, ed., *Engaging Modernity*, Westport: Praeger, 2004, p. 199.

²⁵⁹ Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness*, Stanford: University Press, 1991, p. 15.

²⁶⁰ M. M. Bonga, “Local Administration in the Ncheu District with Special Reference to the Ncheu District Council,” Zomba: Chancellor College, History Department, History Seminar Paper 1972 – 3, p. 5.

that those areas, where the British administration found local leaders that complied with their rule (e.g. Chakhumbira, later the name was changed to Mambeya) saw less Zionist activity, compared to those villages, where the chiefs and population were hardly cooperating. It would, however, be almost impossible to distinguish between a political resistance because of their Ngoni ethnicity and a political resistance due to Zionist spirituality. It was certainly a mixture of many elements. It would be wrong to label Zionist churches as '*political cells*.'²⁶¹ There has always been some involvement in the political sphere, yet the aim was not to cause or prevent a revolution, but to safeguard Zion's spiritual and social values. All churches in Malawi were committed to non-violence. The ZCC (8) in South Africa has scored high on this count, bringing them respect from government and society.²⁶² The churches carried the fight of the Ngoni into a different, spiritual, arena. In this way, Zionism probably contributed more to social and political quietude than has so far been acknowledged.

Malawi's Zionists were not swept along with the first wave of enthusiasm which greeted the homecoming of Hastings Kamuzu Banda in the early 1960s. There were signs of agreement in the churches after Banda had consolidated his grip on power. The Holy Bethlehem Zion Church, also known as Jordan Ziyoni ya bata (5) and the Apostolic Faith Church (7) hastened to be registered with the new Malawi government in 1966 and 1970 respectively.²⁶³ Zionists are by nature conservative and they want to be law-abiding citizens. They have derived this from Romans 13, and interpreted it in the case of Zion ya Kang'oma (6) as an obligation to Kamuzu Banda's government. "*Violence and troublemaking, all these are sins. But meekness, mercy and and to keep the laws of the land, [here] the Party and the members of our Kang'oma church are in agreement.*"²⁶⁴ Yet Banda turned into a totalitarian dictator and this could mean nothing but conflict with churches that were holistic in their philosophy. In 1968,

²⁶¹ David Chidester, *Religions of South Africa*, London: Routledge, 1992, p. 113.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 137.

²⁶³ Int. Bishop Mateyu Kawenga, Nguluyanawambe, 7.10.2008.

²⁶⁴ Wikilifi Chimalo, *Chiyambi cha Mpingo wa Zion m'Chaka cha 1930*, Lilongwe: Likuni Press, 1979, p. 6.

Mlevi Gerson Jeremiah, CCACZ, wrote a letter to the mother church in Zion, Illinois, to ask whether it is permissible to buy MCP party cards or not. The reply did not give a clear answer and the matter was left in the hands of the Malawian Zionists to decide.²⁶⁵ Many Zionists did not buy the obligatory cards, like Bishop Kanjere (14). This barred him from shopping, but he always sent someone else to the market. Archbishop Magagula and his members of the Christian Apostolic Sabbath Church in Zion (13) refused to buy the party cards, too. This repeatedly led to their arrest. Once Magagula was captured by the Malawi Young Pioneers and jailed for four days. He was more dead than alive upon release because during those four days neither food nor water was given to him.²⁶⁶

During Banda's regime, Zionism had to keep a low profile. We could speak of persecution in some individual cases, although the movement as a whole was not oppressed. The Zion ya bata (2) settlement near Salima had to be very diplomatic with the authorities since its size alone had caught their attention. Zion could not hide in the disguise of an African culture and further had to avoid the impression of being an ethnic identity. Any cultural identity apart from Banda's "Chewa-ism" was kept in check; any kind of Ngoni renaissance in the disguise of Zionism would have been nipped in the bud. The government was aware that this was not mainstream Christianity. The Zionists knew that they had to act inconspicuously. One look into the camp of the Jehovah's Witnesses showed what Banda's wrath meant to a religious body.²⁶⁷ Zionist classes often prayed at night and refrained from the use of drums, just not to draw too much attention to themselves.

Bakili Muluzi's government brought several liberties to Malawi, which the administration under President wa Mutharika has safeguarded, too. Freedom of expression is granted; the government tolerates and protects all religious groups in the country to a certain degree. Since then the

²⁶⁵ Int. Bishop Moffat P. Lichapa, Zion ya Bata (2), Ntcheu, 14.10.2007.

²⁶⁶ Int. Bishop Pearson Fasinesi Lipenga Magagula, Kunthawira, Chileka, 4.3.2004.

²⁶⁷ Klaus Fiedler, "Power at the Receiving End: The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in One Party Malawi", in: Kenneth R. Ross, ed., *God, People and Power in Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere, 1996, pp. 149-176.

Zionists, who were clearly on the receiving end of power during the colonial and Banda eras, have been able to walk more upright. The only issue left is faith healing. So far, the government has shown a surprising amount of restraint when it comes to the refusal of blood transfusions among the Jehovah's Witness or cholera treatments for the *Vapostoli* and Zionists. Two children died from measles during the first week of April, 2010, in Chinsapo, Lilongwe. The radio report, from which we gathered this information, did not say which particular denomination was responsible for this, but they mentioned the name 'Zion.'²⁶⁸ The elders of the church apparently did not allow the parents to take the children to hospital. This brought an angry response from the neighbours. They threw stones at the elders and tore the Zion flag apart. As recorded, while the older denominations hold firmly to their faith healing, the younger denominations are more tolerant about it. Time might therefore bring a solution to the conflict.

One might argue that healing churches are by nature apolitical.²⁶⁹ As shown, Zionists are not apolitical, at least not on the local level. Their establishment of religious enclaves in the Malawian countryside speaks of an alternative society envisioned, not by political, but by spiritual powers. Faith healing is indeed the means by which they try to bring that new society about. Time will tell if the younger denominations, whose battle cry is no longer the uncompromising rejection of biomedicine, will become more active in the political sphere.

The downside of freedom is, however, moral dissoluteness. One can hear the church leaders complain about this, some are wishing for a ruler with an iron fist like Banda. Zionism in the country does not grow. Again, the reasons for this are mainly non-political, yet an exilic movement as such is vitalized by oppression and will have to make major adjustments if it is to survive in a benign political climate.

²⁶⁸ Malawi Broadcasting Corporation, *Nkhani za m'Maboma*, 8.4.2010.

²⁶⁹ Quoted from Robert Garner, "The Future of African Independent Churches in South Africa," in: Dawid Venter, ed., *Engaging Modernity*, Westport: Praeger, 2004, p. 200.

d. Relations with other Denominations and Confessions

Islam

Malawi's Muslims comprise about 15% of the population. Most of them belong to one ethnic group, the Yao, which live along the southern Lakeshore.²⁷⁰ Other Muslims are not Yao, for example some communities in and around Blantyre. Zionists see Muslims as people who are not yet saved. Therefore evangelism becomes the prime objective in their dealings with them. While conversions of Muslims to Zion happen reportedly among all denominations in the country, Zionists also loose members to the Islamic faith when women born in Zion marry Muslim men.

One denomination was not only able to convert; the Apostolic Faith Church (7) has successfully established itself among the Yao:²⁷¹ Kachotsa Mataka was born a Muslim, of a Yao father and a Lomwe mother. He lived in Mkoko village, Machinga, and followed Islam for the first fifty years of his life until, in 1950, he met Mr. Mbingwani of the Apostolic Faith Church in Repo, near Zomba. Mataka witnessed the healing ministry of Mbingwani and made a full turn to Christ. This is all the more remarkable since Mataka himself was not sick, but what he saw and heard from that healing ministry convinced him that there is truth in Christianity.²⁷² Mataka never left his home area. He became the leader of the Apostolic Faith Church in the Yao and Lakeshore area and the church penetrated deeply into Yao territory. It is not often that one can find a Christian church in Malawi whose leaders bear Yao names such as Shaibu, Fraji and Mataka. The church is well organized at the time of this writing, with 1500 members congregating in five classes in Chantulo, Mangochi; Nkhande, Machinga; Mwalasi, Machinga; Chitera, Chiradzulo; Lilongwe and then there is a small surviving pocket of Apostolic Faith Church

²⁷⁰ David S. Bone, ed., *Malawi's Muslims. Historical Perspectives*, Zomba: Kachere, 2000.

²⁷¹ Int. E.G. Zingwa NaBengo, Bishop L. Z. Bengo, A. Julius, Dzipirana, Ntcheu, 17, 18. 8. 2005.

²⁷² Int. Justin Kachotsa (son of Mataka), L. Mahata, Mr Mtabwa, Mwalasi, Machinga, 5.3.2006.

people in Dzipirana, Ntcheu. Kachotsa Mataka passed away in 2001. His son, Justin Kachotsa, is the current *mlevi* of the class at Mwalasi.

In contrast to other churches, Zionists do not try to talk Muslims into their church. Yet they are successful, in this case, among the Yao because of the believers' spiritual power, which is manifested through physical healing. Islam itself recognizes mystical powers, but while they have traditions of the prophets' miraculous workings, supernatural healing as such is not known to Muslims in Malawi.²⁷³ Other features make it easier for Muslims to cross over into Zion. The church (7) is *ya bata*, like the Zion *ya bata* (2), wearing plain white robes, shunning loud drumming in their services and taking their shoes off before entering the church, thereby making the transition from an Islamic style of worship smoother. They baptize only once by immersion, so as not to allude too much to the Trinitarian statement, which the 'triune' baptism of other Zionist denominations implies. Yet there is no islamization of Zionism taking place. Contrary to the interplay between African traditional religions and Islam, Zionism will demand radical changes from its converts.²⁷⁴

Zionists avoid clashes with members of other faith communities. They stood down in 2001 at Chief Kunthembwe, in Blantyre, where a sister of the Entopia Zion Church (14) had died. She was a former member of the Islamic faith and all her relatives were Muslims. The family demanded that the body be treated according to Islamic custom. The church leaders were given the opportunity to preach at home and at the grave yard, but everything else was done the Islamic way: washing the body, carrying it in a *jenesa* and a special excavation was dug at the bottom of the grave wherein they placed her remains. The church had no problem with all this, since their eschatology allows them to see beyond the grave.²⁷⁵

²⁷³ Ioan M. Lewis, ed., *Islam in Tropical Africa*, London: Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 60.

²⁷⁴ James N. Amanze, *African Traditional Religion in Malawi: The Case of the Bimbi Cult*, Blantyre: CLAIM, 2002, p. 181.

²⁷⁵ Int. Archbishop S. Kanjere; Bishop Rex Ligopolo; Collin Gwirize; Mrs. Marigeni Nangodzo; Mrs. Chrisy Ligopolo, Mwansambo, 25.2.2010.

African Traditional Religions

The core of traditional religion in Malawi is ancestral veneration. Anything spiritual is linked to the hereafter, in which the spirits of the departed serve as transmitters. Only on rare occasions of crisis did the Ngoni, and other ethnic groups in the country, approach God directly. Ancestral rites are involved or serve as the foundation for rituals, dances and spirit media such as *vimbuza*, *gule wamkulu* and the *M'bona* cult near Nsanje. We have already established that ancestral veneration and invocation is not part of Zionist Christianity. The church leaders' standard answer about traditional religion was "*We do not condone such things.*" They also talked about idolatry in the interviews, which is not the worship of an image or sculpture in their understanding, but anything pertaining to ancestral cults.²⁷⁶ Zionism in Malawi, in agreement with Daneel's findings from Zimbabwe, "*...increases resistance toward ATR ritual.*"²⁷⁷

The question arises: if a religious body actively traditions its rituals, what would be left of ATR after all ancestral elements have been subtracted from it? The choice of worship places may serve as an example: Two ancient sites can be found in the northwest of Ntcheu District as we go along the Kasinje turnoff road to chief Ganya. The people around this area have since ages past revered Magobo and Tsumba hills as the abode of ancestral spirits. Magobo is situated on the eastern direction of Manja village near Kabekela. On top of this hill is a tree attributed with spiritual powers. When people go there to offer sacrifices during draught, the tree starts whispering as if someone was speaking in a low voice, assuring them that their prayers have been heard. Opposite to this place is a shrine on a hilltop called Tsumba. The height is covered with grass and small trees. There is a spring of water that never dries

²⁷⁶ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Zionism and Faith Healing in Rhodesia*, Leiden: Afrika-Studiecentrum, 1970, p. 22.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19. For a similar observation among Pentecostals and the *Vapostoli*, see David Maxwell, "Christianity without Frontiers: Shona Missionaries and Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa", in: David Maxwell, Ingrid Lawrie, eds., *Christianity and the African Imagination, Essays in Honour of Adrian Hastings*, Leiden: Brill, 2002, p. 305.

up.²⁷⁸ Mlevi Chigona of the Mpingo wa Atumwi (17) told us that he takes his congregation to these places. Moreover, he reported that other Zionists go there, too, like Chipiliro Zion Church (12), New Zion Church (15) and CCACZ.²⁷⁹ They have their worship services there. They do not talk to the tree, neither do they try to appease the spirits, but they certainly ascribe spiritual powers to the place.

So we find that, although the needs have remained the same, Malawians worshiping in Zionist churches have these met within their own spiritual setting. Physical and emotional healing, prayers for a good harvest with sufficient rains and protection from hostile forces – the churches provide their own answers. Traditional brokers are therefore seen as spiritual competitors, they are outside of Zion's system. There is no cooperation, on the contrary, traditional healers and doctors are often bashed and ridiculed in Zion's sermons. Their identity is mainly derived from their church, not traditional elements or even other Christian tenets, which are yet outside of Zion's scope. Glossolalia was known among the Zulu *izangoma*. Neither this, nor all the Pentecostals in Malawi could make them speak in tongues.²⁸⁰

Ethiopianism and the Vapostoli

Ethiopian churches have split from a European or American parent body to carve out a niche for African leadership,²⁸¹ while they initially did not differ much in doctrine and worship style.²⁸² They usually keep the tradition of infant baptism, which distinguishes them from other AICs with more of a 'spirit' character. The church sphere was the only place before and after the First World War for Africans to express social and

²⁷⁸ Int. Bishop P.E. Makoko, Kaluzi, 28.2.2006.

²⁷⁹ Int. Mlevi Dickson Chigona, Manja vlg., Ntcheu, 27.2.2006.

²⁸⁰ S.G. Lee, "Spirit Possession among the Zulu". In: John Beattie, John Middleton, eds., *Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa*, New York: African Publishing, 1969, p. 132.

²⁸¹ George Shepperson, "Ethiopianism: Past and Present", in C. G. Baëta, ed., *Christianity in Tropical Africa*, Oxford: International African Institute / Oxford University Press, 1968, pp. 250f.

²⁸² Allan Anderson, Samuel Otwang, *Tumelo. The Faith of African Pentecostals in South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA, 1993, p. 7.

political aspirations, idealized in this Ethiopian vision, a black Africa freed from colonial overlordship.²⁸³ The history of the *Providence Industrial Mission* in Malawi, with its founder John Chilembwe, shows several traits of Ethiopianism.²⁸⁴ Its leader was well educated, initially by a white ‘maverick’ missionary,²⁸⁵ who sent him to the USA for theological training.²⁸⁶ After his return, Chilembwe sought to bring wealth, equality and dignity to his people by emulating a European way of business, education, clothing and worship. His mission was to set up a parallel system which would eventually rival the British dominion.²⁸⁷ Initially trained as a Baptist minister, Chilembwe reacted to the social injustice prevalent among the plantations in the Chiradzulo area. He was killed in a local and ill-planned military uprising, making him the towering hero of Malawian nationalism.

One difference between the early Ethiopian churches and Zion was that the former had contact and some cross-pollination with black churches in the USA, while Zion had its origins with white ministers in America, who, however, had had only anecdotal influence once the movement burst onto the African continent. Another difference is that a Zionist church can historically not become Ethiopian, whereas a good number of Ethiopian churches have spiritually adapted Zionist tenets. In fact, the history between Zionist and Ethiopian churches is governed by a watershed date, 1920.²⁸⁸ After that year, both in West and Southern Africa, the majority of new churches born under “African Religious

²⁸³ Bengt Sundkler, *Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists*, London: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 15.

²⁸⁴ Patrick Makondesa, *The Church History of Providence Industrial Mission*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2006.

²⁸⁵ Harry W. Langworthy, “Africa for the African” *The Life of Joseph Booth*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996.

²⁸⁶ George Shepperson, Thomas Price, *Independent African*, Edinburgh: University Press, 1987.

²⁸⁷ Dawid Venter, ed., *Engaging Modernity*, Westport: Praeger, 2004, p. 37.

²⁸⁸ Harold W. Turner, “A Typology for African Religious Movements”, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Leiden: Brill, Andrew F. Walls, ed., 1967, vol. I, no. 1, pp. 28f.

Movements” are Zionist.²⁸⁹ The Ifa-ifa Zion (4) serves as a fitting example. They came out of the Dutch Reformed Church in 1930 and even retained the mode of infant baptism. A casual look will classify them as an Ethiopian church. But the initial spark was revivalistic; it is a *spiritual* church with healing prayers, prophets and other elements pertaining to the spiritual field. Moreover, their self-designation is important. They call themselves Ifa-ifa Christian *Zion* Church, and so they are. Yet not all churches have so clearly crossed over to Zion. The field research in Malawi initially showed eight more churches which we, by the looks of them, thought were Zionists. Yet their history and self-designation marks them as Ethiopian denominations that have been attracted to Zion’s worship style.

The Watchman Healing Mission (*Ufumu wa Yehova ndi Mikaeli*) is a group that split from Elliot Kamwana’s Watchman Healing Mission in the late 1950s.²⁹⁰ The difference in name is that they call themselves “*Ufumu wa Yehova ndi Mikaeli*,” (The Kingdom of Jehovah and Michael) and also wear this name on their badges, while the mother church still has “*Ine wa Yehova ndi Mikaeli*” (I am of Jehovah and Michael) as its subtitle.²⁹¹ Chilele Phiri of Maela in Chiradzulo brought the split about, on grounds of jealousy, witchcraft accusations and the general turmoil that beset the church after Kamwana’s death in 1956. A. Kaliati succeeded Chilele Phiri and the current leader is Bishop Ndau, resident at Chikunda on the Blantyre – Chileka road. One might detect some tendency toward Zion already in the later ministry of Kamwana himself, e.g. the withdrawal from the world and founding of Chiwangalumwi as a Holy City, bearing resemblance to Ng’ombe’s Zion ya bata (2) near Salima.²⁹² *Ufumu wa Yehova ndi Mikaeli* kept Watchtower doctrine, such as faith in a literal millenium rule of Christ and that there will be only 144000 people in

²⁸⁹ Mary Aquina, “Christianity in a Rhodesian Trust Land”, *African Social Research*, vol. 1, June 1966. Sister Mary researched the history of Jairus Ruponeso Rwakudenga Church among the Karanga people, which was first Ethiopian and turned Zionist.

²⁹⁰ Int. Mr. Tembo, member of the church, Chintheche, 6.6.2004.

²⁹¹ Joseph C. Chakanza, *An Annotated List of African Instituted Church 1900 – 1981*, Zomba: Sources for the Study of Religion in Malawi, no. 10, 1983, church no. 122.

²⁹² Joseph C. Chakanza, *Voices of Preachers in Protest*, Blantyre: CLAIM, 1998, p. 57.

heaven and all other saved people will live on earth. Communion is not celebrated. Communion is so restricted under the Watchtower teaching, both in time and persons allowed to take it, that it is virtually non-existent to the ordinary member. Zionist influences are seen in their uniforms. Everybody is dressed in white garments, women wear a scarf and men a cloth shaped like a helmet. Every member is to own a flag and bring it to their services with the inscription, “Ufumu wa Yehova ndi Mikaeli,” They try to follow all levitical dietary laws. Baptism is by single immersion in the name of Yehova and Mikaeli. They believe that the Michael mentioned in Rev. 12:7 is a personification of Christ.²⁹³

Two reasons come to the fore when the change from an Ethiopian kind of church towards Zionism is analysed. The time is Malawi in the 1920s to 1940s, after the Chilembwe rising when the majority of Christians worshipped in the mission churches of CCAP synods, RCC and other denominations. First, those churches did not offer enthusiastic spirituality. Moreover, they lacked a holistic approach to life, evidenced by their inability to deal with spirit-afflictions and the absence of spirit-healing. While the RCC kept at least the ‘mystery of the eucharist’ in front of Malawian worshippers, the Protestant churches are best characterized by what Berger calls, “*an immense shrinkage in the scope of the sacred in reality.*”²⁹⁴ Zionism was an answer to this, quenching the spiritual thirst of the people. The other reason is certainly political. The government clamped down on all churches which aspired to *more* than spirituality, this being the outcome of the Chilembwe Rising in 1915. It might have well killed the Ethiopian dream in Malawian hearts and so the turn to a religion with less political aspirations but more spiritual implications made perfect sense.

While the Ethiopian churches are to the right of the Zionists, older, more conservative, rather urban and closer to a European form of Christianity, the *Vapostoli* cluster is to the left of them, unorthodox, shot through with African culture and spiritually even more innovative. To call

²⁹³ Int. Mr. Howa, Thondwe, 29.7.2004.

²⁹⁴ Inger Furseth, Pål Repstad, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007 p. 94.

them *Vapostoli* is the best designation in our case. They themselves use the word, and it avoids confusion with other Pentecostal, Ethiopian or Zionist denominations bearing the name “Apostolic.” The prefix *va-* is Shona, a language not spoken in Malawi. Yet the *Vapostoli* in this country use Shona as their liturgical language.²⁹⁵ The following points mark the difference between *Vapostoli* and Zionist churches:

Vapostoli are historically and doctrinally still further from the Pentecostal-Zionist camp; common roots, like the link to the early AFM in South Africa and Zimbabwe, are less of an influence.²⁹⁶ Most of them were founded by African prophets and imported to Malawi by the *machona*; others are split from missionary churches or even other AICs in the country. Neither do the *Vapostoli* have a shared historical origin among themselves. Instead, they find their common dominator in certain doctrinal and liturgical elements. The most influential *Vapostoli* in Malawi are from Zimbabwe, the *Vapostoli a Johane Masowe* (Gospel of God Church) and the *African Apostolic Church of Johane Maranke*.²⁹⁷ On the outside, they worship in long white robes, but, in contrast to the Zionists, the men must shave their heads. “*We associate hair with demons. Most of the time we know that a person is mad when the hair is unkempt.*”²⁹⁸ They do not adhere closely to the Bible as a written revelation. One church in Zimbabwe, the *Friday Masowe Church (Masowe weChishanu)* even rejects the Bible because anything material (‘thingification’) is contrary to pure spirituality.²⁹⁹ Mbale Mbuu in Ndirande, Blantyre, the late founder of the Seventh Day Apostoli Church, rejected the sign of the

²⁹⁵ Lucy S. Banda, *The Masowe and Maranke Apostles in Malawi: Dynamics of the Entry, Growth, Development and Impact, 1950-2002*, MA, Zomba: University of Malawi, 2003, p. 55.

²⁹⁶ Clive M. Dillon-Malone, *The Korsten Basketmakers. A Study of the Masowe Apostles an Indigenous African Religious Movement*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978, pp. 20ff.

²⁹⁷ Lucy S. Banda, *The Masowe and Maranke Apostles in Malawi: Dynamics of the Entry, Growth, Development and Impact, 1950-2002*, MA, Zomba: University of Malawi, 2003.

²⁹⁸ Int. Evangelist Frank Saka, Apositoli a Yohane Masowe, Blantyre: *Weekend Nation*, 4.3.2006, p. 10. Matthew Engelke, *A Problem of Presence. Beyond Scripture in an African Church*, Berkeley: University of California, 2007, p. 123.

²⁹⁹ Matthew Engelke, *A Problem of Presence. Beyond Scripture in an African Church*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

cross, he said it is a sign for a graveyard and that Jesus died “*on a stick*”, like the Mormons believe.³⁰⁰

Inspiration roams freely, leading to a multiplicity of rites, rituals and sacraments. We had an unforgettable night with the members of God’s Message Apostle Church, a *Vapostoli* denomination, led by Albert Mpochera. Believers are expected to prove their faith by “*stamping on the fire. This inspiration is from the Lord.*”³⁰¹

The ceremony took place after dark, before the sermon, at their gathering place in Chileka and I was able to take some pictures of the ritual. They are supposed to slowly walk over and even briefly sit on the coals. Burns give evidence that the member is not yet strong in faith.³⁰² Such practise is known in a few South African churches, too. There the ailing person has to jump over the flames so that the fire burns the sickness.³⁰³ Fire jumping or escaping from it is part of traditional initiation ceremonies in Malawi.³⁰⁴ The Ngoni had a puberty ritual where a boy had to apply a sacred medicine, *uludengele*, and jump over the fire after it had been administered.³⁰⁵ *Uludengele* was believed to harden the boy into a man. It remains doubtful if Mpochera’s fire jumping has anything to do with this. He himself is not Ngoni and his church steps into the fire, they do not jump over it. Once a year, the *Maranke Vapostoli* jump over a fire, as part of their *pascha* celebration.³⁰⁶ By comparison, their nearby Zion brothers of the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3) condemn this practise and view it as devilish. A traditional background does not suffice to

³⁰⁰ Int. Mrs. Kanyaza, Mrs. Dzimbiri, Seventh Day Apositoli Church of Mbale Mbuu, Blantyre, 24.3.2004.

³⁰¹ God’s Message Apostle, *Church Constitution According to God’s Will*, Blantyre: Jerusalem 20, A., Elijah Villa, nd., p.2.

³⁰² Int. Pastor Nalunji, Chimwankhunda, 17.10.2002.

³⁰³ Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 74.

³⁰⁴ Brian Morris, *Animals and Ancestors. An Ethnography*, Oxford: Berg, 2000, p. 126.

³⁰⁵ Margaret Read, *Children of their Fathers*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968, p. 65.

³⁰⁶ Lucy S. Banda, *The Masowe and Maranke Apostles in Malawi: Dynamics of the Entry, Growth, Development and Impact, 1950-2002*, MA, Zomba: University of Malawi, 2003, p. 69.

sanction a ritual in a Zionist church, especially if the Bible is silent on the subject.

The *Vapostoli*'s stand against biomedicine is still absolute, while the Zionists as a whole have become more flexible on the issue. Four children and one adult of the Seventh Day Apostoli Church died in 2006 when the believers refused medical treatment after a Cholera outbreak in Ndirande. The police, a youth counsellor, Group Village Headman Matope



Not known among Zionists, but some *Vapostoli* groups in the country are '*odumpha moto*,' they jump through fire.

and the UDF chairperson for the area came and tried to dissuade the leaders. All to no avail: out of 15 infected, ten went to hospital and were saved. The five who did not go, or were not allowed to go, died on the 2nd and 3rd of January 2006.³⁰⁷

Vapostoli are in general more aggressive in their evangelism and in their apologetics, too. I saw a group of preachers evangelizing in front of

³⁰⁷ Int. Group Village Headman Matope, Safarao, Ndirande, 1.2.2006. Int. Pastor Mchenga, Safarao, Ndirande, 11.1.2006. Int. *Mlevi* Mlangeni, Safarao, Ndirande, 13.1.2006. *The Nation* Newspaper, Blantyre, 6.1.2006.

Standard Bank in Limbe on a Friday in September 2007. It is a place where people use to take their lunches; and many charismatic, Pentecostal and independent preachers make it a venue to address potential converts. There were five *Vapostoli*, all clad in white robes. One of them was preaching with an enormous staff in one hand and a not less impressive Bible in the other hand. The other four stood in a row behind their frontman and made the impression to serve as a backup. One of them read the Bible verses, which the preacher called by chapter and verse, but he himself seemed to use the Bible only as a symbol which he waved incessantly at his audience. Numbers weren't big that day. There were about ten workers from nearby shops, munching breads and biting into their sugarcanes. After fifteen minutes, only one listener was left. Mbale Mbuu (Kalikokha Moffat) locked horns with some Islamic sheiks in Ndirande in 1995. They had a public debate into which Mbale Mbuu entered as the self-titled 'lawyer of Christianity.'³⁰⁸ The discussions were held under the theme: 'Which is the true religion, Christianity or Islam.' The confrontation sparked some interest in the 'born again' camp, while the leaders of the 'mainline' churches were rather bewildered about it.³⁰⁹ While Zionists worship in public but direct their doings mainly 'to the heaven,' the *Vapostoli* are face to face with their audience.

While the Zionists are autonomous, the *Vapostoli* churches that stem from Zimbabwe are subject to their headquarters in that country.³¹⁰ Ritual serves the leaders to strengthen their grip on the periphery: only Masowe was entitled to baptize, the distribution of the Lord's Supper is the prerogative of the lineage of Johane Maranke.³¹¹ Their current Highpriest Noah comes once a year to Malawi to perform this duty.

³⁰⁸ *The Nation* Newspaper, Blantyre, 24.2.2005.

³⁰⁹ Int. Ezra Mpisamanja, Safarao, Ndirande, 24.2.2005.

³¹⁰ Lucy S. Banda, *The Masowe and Maranke Apostles in Malawi: Dynamics of the Entry, Growth, Development and Impact, 1950-2002*, MA, Zomba: University of Malawi, 2003, p. 23.

³¹¹ Joseph C. Chakanza, *An Annotated List of African Instituted Church 1900 – 1981*, Zomba: Sources for the Study of Religion in Malawi, no. 10, 1983, see church no. 64.

Some *Vapostoli* congregations form much closer economic networks, initially to boycott the white system.³¹² They started out as churches built on kinship ties and have in many places opted for communal living.³¹³ In this respect, only Ng'ombe's settlement (2) seems to be on par with them. Polygamy is as much allowed among the *Vapostoli* as it is prohibited with the Zionists. It is doubtful, however, if the outcome is much different. Monogamy is the chosen form of marriage with more than 95% of all *Vapostoli* near Mzimba.³¹⁴

The most significant difference is the messianism prevalent in some *Vapostoli* churches, but absent in Zion. Founders are revered and, even more, seen as a reincarnation of Jesus Christ. Evangelist Frank Jada of the Masowe Apostles said about Johane Masowe: *"The world is eagerly waiting for the return of Christ but we believe Jesus Christ is already here."*³¹⁵ They also believe that Masowe has the power to remove people from hell and bring them into heaven.³¹⁶ Other statements about salvation range from legalism to evangelical theology: According to their Bishop Makawa, members of the *Jesus Church* are saved by observing their commandments, ceremonial and moral laws.³¹⁷ Pastor Zulu of the "Old" Apostles (Maranke) in Ndirande says that salvation includes abstaining from pork. *"It's like rules and by-laws. The Ten Commandments are the rules, but the dietary laws are the by-laws, and one has to abide by them, too."*³¹⁸ Rather evangelical is the declaration by Apostle Elijah of

³¹² Clive M. Dillon-Malone, *The Korsten Basketmakers. A Study of the Masowe Apostles an Indigenous African Religious Movement*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978.

³¹³ Marthinus L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol. 2, The Hague: Mouton, 1974, p. 167.

³¹⁴ Lucy S. Banda, *The Masowe and Maranke Apostles in Malawi: Dynamics of the Entry, Growth, Development and Impact, 1950-2002*, MA, Zomba: University of Malawi, 2003, p. 53.

³¹⁵ Int. Evangelist Frank Saka, Apositoli a Yohane Masowe, Blantyre: Weekend Nation, 4.3.2006, p. 10.

³¹⁶ Lucy S. Banda, *The Masowe and Maranke Apostles in Malawi: Dynamics of the Entry, Growth, Development and Impact, 1950-2002*, MA, Zomba: University of Malawi, 2003, p. 57.

³¹⁷ Int. Bishop Makawa, Balaka, 12.8.2003.

³¹⁸ Int. Pastor Zulu, Blantyre, 2.9.2009.

God's Message Apostle Church (those that walk through the fire): "*People must believe in the name of Jesus and they will be saved.*"³¹⁹

It is not my task to denigrate the *Vapostoli* churches here. Careless generalizations will also not hold true in their case, since they display an amazing variety in Malawi. They are in comparison with the Zionists, more radical in their convictions and more outgoing in their propagation. Yet they shun other churches and deny any cooperation with Zionists.³²⁰

Pentecostals

"...all the demons driven out by the Pentecostals should not come and dwell in the hearts of Zionists, hallelujah."³²¹

Zionists and Pentecostals have been grouped into the same camp by various observers.³²² Belief in the healing power of the Holy Spirit, authority of Scripture, baptism and spiritual explanations for misfortune and illness all belong to both groups. The underlying mystic foundation, the spiritual field, is a common marker to both movements.

In the beginning, Zionists and Pentecostals not only shared a common cradle but actually had real fellowship with each other in Malawi. For example a meeting was held on the 25.12.1933 at Bula village, Ntcheu, with Herbert Kakhobwe of the AFM (later to start the Apostolic Faith Church [7]), Lighton Kalambule of the Full Gospel Church (later to become a founder of the Assemblies of God) and Amos Chimasula of the CCACZ.³²³ They worshipped together and listened to each others' sermons. Pentecostals in Malawi even took over the Zion greeting, '*Ukuthula*,'

³¹⁹ God's Message Apostle, *Church Constitution According to God's Will*, Blantyre: Jelusalem 20, A., Elijah Villa, n.d., p. 1.

³²⁰ Allan Anderson, *Zion and Pentecost*, Pretoria: Unisa, 2000, p. 46.

³²¹ *Mlevi* Kalulu, sermon, CCACZ (1), Kampala, Blantyre, 2.7.2006.

³²² James Pfeiffer, "Money, Modernity and Morality: Traditional Healing and the Expansion of the Holy Spirit in Mozambique", in: Harry G. West, Tracy J. Luedke, eds., *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 99.

³²³ Int. Elijah L. Kalambule, Blantyre, 5.5.2004.

which is Zulu and means 'Peace.'³²⁴ (The usual greeting in Zion, Illinois, was 'Peace to thee.'³²⁵)

Sadly, both movements have since then drifted apart and have become estranged. Often leaders of either side have tried to turn back time and win the other party back to their own persuasion. The white AFM missionary Luttig was granted permission to enter Zimbabwe in 1919, but the government put so many restrictions on his work, that he was in fact barred from any exercise of it. Interestingly, Luttig had great esteem for his own spiritual powers. He promised the government to eradicate the Zionist movement in the country, by bringing them back into his AFM fold, if recognition be returned to him. Such a promise was, of course, out of this world, neither did Luttig's plan have any effect on the government's attitude.³²⁶

There have been several attempts in Malawi to win converts or even entire denominations over to the other camp. We have already seen how Kakhobwe (7) left the Pentecostals and turned into a full-blown Zionist, taking many AFM members with him. Another denomination led to the local demise of a Pentecostal church: The above mentioned Josamu Jede Masina had been a member of the CCACZ in Ntcheu, when, by the end of the 1960s, he was shunned by his fellow believers because of hospital treatment which he received after colliding with a car near Lizulu. His leaders saw an evident lack of faith and excommunicated him without further ado. Masina was visited in Zomba Central Hospital by two AFM leaders, Wakeford Julius Hema and Raskell Chimpuzi. So much care proved irresistible to Masina and he joined the AFM at Mazonda in 1971. Unfortunately, the two leaders, Hema and Chimpuzi went separate ways. Hema had introduced a second wife to his family, which neither went down well with the AFM church. He was also willing to receive more

³²⁴ Int. Rev. D. Maclean, Ngodzi, 28.9.2000. Bengt Sundkler, *Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists*, London: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 37. Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 40.

³²⁵ Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985, p. 183.

³²⁶ Terence O. Ranger, *State and Church in Southern Rhodesia, 1919-1939*, Harare: Historical Association of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, n.d., p. 5.

Zionists, even though they were not prepared to do away with their robes and staffs. This was all too alien to Chimpuza and the church split in two. Masina, confused by the quarrel of his two Good Samaritans, could not take sides and therefore decided to found his own church, called the *Mpingo wa Atumwi a Yesu* (17); started in 1974. The end of the story is that the AFM church has been obliterated from Mazonda village. The *Mpingo wa Atumwi a Yesu* is a Zionist denomination (for many of Hema's followers joined Masina) but moderate and *ya bata*, which certainly stems from its Pentecostal roots, too.³²⁷

Kakhobwe and Masina aside, the greatest challenge to Zion, and a powerful factor why the churches are not growing any longer, are the Pentecostals. One can hear many testimonies from Pentecostals, especially those around Ntcheu, who have stepped out of Zion and joined the Assemblies of God, the Apostolic Faith Mission, Living Waters and others. To them, their past was backward and primitive. There is a certain nostalgia when thinking back to those Zion days, but rather as someone would remember his youthful follies.

Ereck Dauya joined the Zionists (CCACZ) in Ntcheu when he was only ten years old, in 1966.³²⁸ As a child, he was naturally drawn to their music, their colourful display of spiritual powers and all the bustle that went on during the worship. He had sores on his legs, and all the healing prayers in Zion did not stop them from festering. His brother, who worships in the Zambezi Evangelical Church, applied medicine to the sores, which helped. This had to be done in secret, though, and more than once Dauya came close to be caught by the Zionists. In 1968, he started his own 'Children Zion,' a congregation made up entirely of children, with him a twelve-year old as the youngsters' bishop. They even had a grass hut sanctuary and sometimes hundreds of children gathered around it. The adults, however, saw this as an increasing threat and the Zionist leaders burned the childrens' church. Dauya went away and joined the Zambezi Evangelical Church. Apart from burning his church, he was disappointed with some leaders in Zion over the medical question. Those who preached

³²⁷ Int. *Mlevi* Dickson Chigona, Manja, Ntcheu, 27.2.2006.

³²⁸ Int. Pastor Ereck Dauya, AFM, Ndirande, 26.5.2010.

abstinence from biomedicine did in secret go to the hospital, “*That is what put me off.*”³²⁹

He turned urban in 1972 and worshiped in one of the Churches of Christ in Blantyre. Revival meetings were held during those years in the city’s streets and fellowships and Dauya underwent a conversion experience. He was later filled with the Holy Spirit, started to speak in tongues and felt a great urge to go out and preach the Gospel to the people. The charismata did not go down well with the Churches of Christ; they mocked him whenever he preached and spoke in tongues. In 1985, his affiliation followed the spiritual experience when Dauya became an AFM member. He went to their Bible College and became a successful pastor in Dedza. He was elected as National Chairman of the church in 1996, and served in that capacity until 2010.³³⁰

On the first look, it becomes apparent that Zion lost an able leader in Ereck Dauya, whose leadership and preaching skills were then utilized somewhere else. His story supplies us with several reasons why Zion has lost so many members – and why Pentecostalism has risen as the towering alternative to Zionism.

Their rigid stand on faith healing proves to be the biggest fly in the ointment in comparison to the Pentecostals. The latter started out with the same prohibition – no medicine allowed - but they have changed. In Malawi, Pentecostal missionaries sanctioned biomedicine, first for their own need to acclimatize to the tropical conditions and, as a consequence, they cleared their African brothers to seek medical assistance, too. This happened under protests from the Malawian pastors, resulting in breakaways and schisms in the 1940s and 1950s, but nonetheless, the Pentecostals have overcome the issue.³³¹ “*While recognizing that the Bible does not forbid the use of natural helps, we of the Assemblies of God*

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ See chapter 6 in Ulf Strohehn, *Pentecostalism in Malawi: A History of the AFM*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005.

³³¹ Ulf Strohehn, *Pentecostalism in Malawi: A History of the AFM*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005, pp. 102f. G.C. Mvula, E.M. Lwesya, *Flames of Fire*, Lilongwe: Assemblies of God in Malawi, 2005, pp. 138ff.

will encourage our people to exercise faith for their deliverance and follow the Bible pattern for healing."³³² It is good to keep in mind that missionaries were instrumental in bringing this about, especially when compared to the Zionists.

It is further significant that Dauya's turn from Zionism had something to do with his move to an urban centre. Zion is a stronghold in Ntcheu rural, but it is not a church for the aspiring city dweller. Studies of localities show that African Independent movements can dwindle and loose their members to the socially established churches.³³³ Zion is emphatically rural. Several reasons come to the fore. The churches were founded by *machona* pioneers, who had the means to purchase land or cattle in the countryside. Furthermore, they had acquired a distaste for the urban milieu during their time in mine compounds and townships. This was spiritually validated by laws of ritual purity and Zion's ingrained exilic character. Land was still available in Malawi during the first part of the century and so they established rural havens; they literally built their own world, Zion. While the founders and headquarters stayed in the villages, an ever increasing part of the population has been drawn to the urban centers.

*"Religious universes crumble for a reason, and that reason is most often that they are no longer integrative of the rest of social relations."*³³⁴ More than any other church, Pentecostalism took Zion's place in the municipalities. Robes and beards mean that Zionists will not conform to modern, urban society. They are often scoffed and scorned by local residents, a disdain which they interpret as a confirmation for their elevated spiritual status.³³⁵ Pentecostals, on the other hand, have adapted to the modern way of life. Seeing Pentecostal pastors preach in their business suits, adorned with cuffs and stylish neckties, strongly marks the difference to the Zionists. Ladies worshipping in Pentecostal churches can do so in their business suits or they dress with all

³³² *Ibid.*, p. 141.

³³³ Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985, p. 192.

³³⁴ Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993, p. 140.

³³⁵ David Chidester, *Religions of South Africa*, London: Routledge, 1992, p. 138.

exuberance and African colourfulness. At least in this respect (and especially in Africa), Pentecostalism has caught up with Zion's visual fulsomeness. Their dresses are not prophetically designed, they stand for something else: success and material wealth.

Pentecostals are quick to soak up new spiritual currents that come into the country. They use all kinds of media, radio, television, books and pamphlets to propagate their faith. I heard a chorus in a Pentecostal church in Nchalo, which exemplifies how they adapt to modernity:

Amayankha, amayankha Yesu

Ndikayimba selula

*Ayankha Yesu.*³³⁶

He answers, Jesus
answers

when I call with my
cell phone

Jesus will answer

The reader can well imagine what kind of movements the worshippers made when singing this chorus. Adjusting to some degree to society is the Pentecostals' strength. Zion's weakness is precisely their refusal to be part of this kind of life. Like in Mozambique, they are seen as backward, unconnected and unadapted to modernity.³³⁷

Zionism in Malawi was born out of transnationalism. Since then, the churches have lost most, if not all, contact to parent bodies in South Africa and the USA, with the exception of the ZCC (8). Such isolation does not sit well with Malawians in general. People do not want to be stuck.³³⁸ They seek regional and international connections for pursuing their spiritual, material and educational goals. Pentecostalism is truly global. It

³³⁶ Chorus, Nchalo AFM church, 24.4.2005.

³³⁷ T. Cruz e Silva, "Entre a Exclusão Social e o Exercício da Cidadania: Igrejas 'Zione' do Bairro Luís Cabral, na Cidade de Maputo", *Estudos Moçambicanos* 19, 2000, p. 63, in: G. Seibert, "But the Manifestation", in: E. Morier-Genoud, D. Péclard, eds., *Le Fait Missionnaire*, Lausanne: UNIL, vol. 17, 2005, p. 141.

³³⁸ Rijk van Dijk, "Transnational Images of Pentecostal Healing: Comparative Examples from Malawi and Botswana", in: H. G. West, T. J. Luedke, eds., *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 104.

is both, a passenger and a driver in the globalization phenomenon.³³⁹ And they play this strength.³⁴⁰ Ereck Dauya turned away from Zion and has since then enjoyed the blessings, which global Pentecostalism was able to bestow upon him. He received a Diploma from a Bible College which was at that time affiliated with a South African theological institute. He received driving lessons from a missionary working with his church in Malawi. A partner church in South Africa and a German mission later donated a car. Another missionary served with him during his time as regional chairman of the Central Region of Malawi. During those years he had to improve his English, too, to be able to converse with missionaries and church leaders from other countries. Dauya has travelled widely in his capacity as National Chairperson of the AFM, in all of Southern Africa and in Europe, too.

Dauya stated further that to him spiritual elements were missing while he was with the Zionists. *"What is missing in Zion is the Word of God."*³⁴¹ He felt undernourished under their sermons, looking not only for moral implications and enthusiastic dancing but for intellectual stimuli as well. And they never seemed to invite people, in altar-call-fashion, to make a conscious choice for a life with Christ, something that really disturbed the budding evangelist in him. A watershed experience to him was the baptism with the Holy Spirit, and he subsequently spoke in tongues, too. Dauya said that during *seji*, Zionists are filled with the Holy Spirit, but it is not such a liberating experience as with the Pentecostals, who break out into unknown tongues or prophesying and become fervent evangelists afterwards.

Many churches, like the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3), did not really understand my question (oral, not a questionnaire) about speaking in tongues, which shows that it is a very strange thing to them. While Dowie rejected glossolalia, the African church (3) at some point in time

³³⁹ David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002.

³⁴⁰ Rijk van Dijk, "Transnational Images of Pentecostal Healing: Comparative Examples from Malawi and Botswana", in: H. G. West, T. J. Luedke, eds., *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 119.

³⁴¹ Int. Pastor Ereck Dauya, AFM, Ndirande, 26.5.2010.

bore this notion and made experiences accordingly. John George Phillips had heard about the baptism of the Holy Spirit from early South African Pentecostals. He made the experience and had it anchored in the constitution of the church, § 14, “The Baptism in the Holy Ghost.” This, however, never came to Malawi, as I found out when interviewing the older members of the church.³⁴² The bishop of New Zion Church (15) has developed his own understanding on the issue, which is still far from the classic Pentecostal teaching. To him, the difference is between the “tongues of men” and the “tongues of angels,” which can be found in 1. Corinthians 13:1. Tongues of men is slanderous talk, the kind of language unbelievers utter over a beer brawl. Tongues of angels, according to the bishop, are those sweet words which can be heard in church, which believers use when talking to each other and when praying to the Lord.³⁴³ Hardly any other leader knew what we meant by speaking in tongues.³⁴⁴ In the Zion ya bata (2) speaking in tongues is practised, especially during prophetic preaching. I witnessed one lady preacher at Salima, who spoke for only five minutes, but did so in her native Yao, in Chinyanja and in unknown tongues. Glossolalia is further practised in the Apostoli Zion Church (16). They see it as such a spiritual merit that only prophets speak in tongues, yet they are expected to. Glossolalia is rejected in the ZCC (8):

Preacher	We have no college, college for speaking in tongues, please men of God... be informed about this...one tells his friend to say, 'la la la la la, ta ta ta ta,' then the other person says...do we, as Zionists, do that?
Congregation	No!
Preacher	Does anyone know how to speak in tongues here?

³⁴² Int. with the leaders of the HACZ, Bishop F.B. Chaluluka, Mrs. Chaluluka, General Levi L.N. Nkhoma, L. Mbewe, A. F. Sagona Chisale, Whwayo, 14.6.2003.

³⁴³ Int. Bishop P. E. Makoko, Kaluzi, 28.2.2006.

³⁴⁴ Interviewed were leaders of the CCACZ and churches no. 12, 14, 19, 21 and 25.

Congregation No, nobody.”³⁴⁵

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a decisive factor towards the priesthood of all believers in Pentecostal churches. It is empowerment (from ‘on High’, as they say) and does not discriminate between gender, education and age. This is the reason why Pentecostals, in contrast to other churches including the Zionists, do not have such a rigid hierarchy. They do not use the title ‘bishop’ for their overseers, except in Eastern Europe and in Africa. One did not ‘rise in rank’ and titles for the clergy were absent during the first generation. Another major difference between Zionists and Pentecostals is the prophet-healer, so prominent in Zion. Pentecostals often don’t bother to know the sickness of the person they are praying over, whereas the Zionist first seeks to arrive at a Spirit-revealed diagnosis. Most Pentecostals would strongly reject any symbolic means to achieve healing, like the items in the Zionist healer’s toolbox: sticks, holy water, flour, milk and ashes. Pentecostals prophesy a lot, but they have their reservations concerning the office of the Zionist prophet.³⁴⁶

It is not only the organization of offices which is more structured among the Zionists, but their services as well. Pentecostals do dance in their meetings, especially in Africa, yet at the spur of inspiration, not as a fixed item in their liturgy. They do not dance themselves *into* the presence of God, the gifts of the Spirit, the preaching and communal prayer get them there, but they dance *after* arriving in the spiritual field. This said, the development over the last one hundred years has certainly shown that Pentecostals also adopt some kind of liturgy. Constantly rising is the amount which worship music takes in the Pentecostal services, African forms of it might one day come close to what the Zionists have been practising for so many years in Malawi. The Zionists have successfully incorporated the spiritual field into their worship order, while

³⁴⁵ Minister Chilowa Banda, ZCC, *sermon*, Majiga, Ndirande, Blantyre, 9.7.2006.

many Pentecostals still feel that any 'order' is meddling with the promptings of the Spirit.

Ereck Dauya had two years of intramural theological training at a Pentecostal Bible College in Blantyre. He graduated with a Diploma in Theology. He made friends with many fellow students, a link which helped him in the ministry to come. The Pentecostals' openness towards urban culture and learning eventually helped them to overcome their dislike for institutional clerical training.³⁴⁷ This happened during their second generation, worldwide, when social lift was in progress. Future pastors and leaders have been exposed to systematic theological work, standards of spiritual quality and fertilizing spiritual ideas. Moreover, theological institutions have shaped a sense of brotherhood and leadership among Malawi's Pentecostals.³⁴⁸ The Zionists, however, are still frozen in their stand. They try hard to keep their systems closed in this area, apart from a few exceptions, as we have noted.

Missionaries and Transnationalism

"Religious independency is a matter of degree."³⁴⁹

On the 16th of June 1930, an enthusiastic, spirit-filled revival broke out in a congregation of the Dutch Reformed Church at Mgundadzuwa, Dedza.³⁵⁰ Two months later, the DRC congregation at Dzenza, a little further from Mgundadzuwa, was split over the issue, although influential elders believed in the supernatural manifestations. They were Mumba Julubeke, Simion Tambala, Mizeke Chikudzu and Mr. Kambubvu from Chinkhota village, all DRC members, of course. Chikudzu functioned as the local pastor, Katsichi was an elder. At first, they were reprimanded by the

³⁴⁶ Allan Anderson, Samuel Otwang, *Tumelo. The Faith of African Pentecostals in South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA, 1993, pp. 122f.

³⁴⁷ Ulf Strohehn, *Pentecostalism in Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere, 2002, p. 133.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 136ff.

³⁴⁹ Joseph C. Chakanza, "Towards an Interpretation of Independent Churches in Malawi", *Africa Theological Journal*, n.d., vol. 11, 1982, p. 135.

³⁵⁰ Wikilifi Chimalo, *Chiyambi cha Mpingo wa Zion m'Chaka cha 1930*, Limbe: Likuni Press, 1979, p. 3.

white missionary, Rev. Stengman, to stop their enthusiastic worship. They answered that they were “*unable to stop it, since it was not intentional, but that they were governed by the power of the Holy Spirit.*”³⁵¹ With no reconciliation in sight, Katchisi was on his way to the DRC headquarters at Mvera, where he arrived on the 3rd October 1930. He was received by missionary Strydom (Sitondomu), who was sympathetic towards him.³⁵² Strydom tried to solve the issue between Katsichi and Stengman by letter, which he sent with Katsichi. Unfortunately, Katsichi and his local missionary could not see eye to eye. Stengman forbade Katsichi to preach, which, in turn, invoked pronouncements of God’s wrath upon the white man. They must have quarreled for quite some time. Katsichi even ridiculed Stengman’s name by pronouncing it first in Chichewa, “Sitenkemani”, and from there back into English, “Stinking man.”³⁵³ Shortly after, Stengman fell sick, which Katsichi interpreted as divine judgment upon the missionary, while he went from strength to strength with successful healing campaigns in and around Salima, eventually leading to the establishment of the Ifa-ifa Zion Christian Church (4).

Malawi’s Zionists have never had a missionary sent to them and settle among them. That is the reason why there has been very little talk of missionaries in this study so far. Yet the *missionary element* is important in the development of the movement, both by its absence and by foreign influences, which have nevertheless found their subtle way into the churches. Talking of missionaries will, not surprisingly, automatically bring us to the theme of church autonomy. I believe that the discussion of “religious independency” belongs, to a great deal, to the past and even then it came from a perspective alien to the subjects of such studies. To discuss independency more than fifty years after regaining political sovereignty and more than a hundred years since their white founder

³⁵¹ “...sikunatheke kuleka, popeza kuti silinali dala, koma mphamvu ya Mzimu Woyera ndiyo imawalamulira.” *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁵² M.W. Retief, *William Murray of Nyasaland*, Alice: Lovedale Press, 1958, p. 65.

³⁵³ Wikilifi Chimalo, *Chiyambi cha Mpingo wa Zion m’Chaka cha 1930*, Limbe: Likuni Press, 1979, p. 12.

died, would mean to overemphasize an episode that has passed in Zion's history.

Many Zionists see missionaries as too foreign, almost alien to their world. They would not welcome them as brothers or sisters in Christ, but understand them as intruders, potential ruiners of ritual purity and their way of life. A good example for this, whether as fact or as a scapegoat story, is the fate of John Lewis and the CCACZ. The *ya bata* churches believe that this white man introduced drumming to Zion in Malawi. He is said to have committed adultery with a prophetess and was consequently excommunicated from the church.³⁵⁴ We see a protecting mechanism at work which can be found in Hinduism, too: Declare the ritual impurity of an impostor and his ideas will be rejected, too. The Zionists consider Europeans and Americans professing to be Christians, and to some degree even Africans worshiping in mission churches, as living self-indulgent lives.³⁵⁵ Mission churches are viewed as distortion of true apostolic Christianity, with a superimposed western culture, shot through with foreign medical substances, which the Zionists regard as alien both to their tradition and to their faith. Zionists see themselves in comparison as keepers of the faith. In Stengman's case we find a pattern which had a more widespread use in South Africa during the apartheid era. Healing rituals have been used by many Zionists to assert their religious superiority over white churches where God was apparently not working in such a miraculous way.³⁵⁶

Not much attracted the Zionists towards an affiliation with foreign missions during the first generation. The South African CCACZ representative, Van Buren Shumaker had by 1925 reasserted white control over the CCACZ in South Africa. He sent Dingiswayo north to Malawi, but such an emissary could not win the sympathy of the government. Like missionaries of the AFM, which had by 1919 two whites

³⁵⁴ Int. Jameson Office, Senior Inspector, Zion *ya bata* (2) and other leaders, Salima, 29.7.2007.

³⁵⁵ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990 p. 214.

³⁵⁶ Linda E. Thomas, *Under the Canopy*, Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1999, p. 119.

working in Rhodesia, Sister Goldie at Gwanda and Brother Luttig at Gatooma, Dingiswayo was greatly troubled by various prohibitions which the administration threw at him. The Chief Native Commissioner regarded Zionists and Pentecostal missionaries as a *“menace stirring up discontent among the natives.”*³⁵⁷ Dingiswayo was the first and the last emissary sent by a foreign church body to settle and work among the Zionists in Malawi. He does, however, not fit the cross-cultural definition of missionary, since he had been born and raised in Malawi.

There can be no doubt that Zionists, while observing their Pentecostal cousins, became increasingly self-assured about their independence as all *machona* Pentecostal denominations were taken over by white missionaries between 1944 and 1970. The one thing that stirred Herbert Kakhobwe more than anything else to break away from the AFM in 1948 was Robert Chinguwo’s drive to bring missionaries into the AFM in Malawi. Now, Kakhobwe is long gone, he died in 1981, but still the Ntcheu group has that antipathy against whites. *“Africans must worship God according to their own culture.”* But what happens, asked the research assistant, if he would have brought a white man to their church? *“Don’t dare to do such a thing! He could not be welcomed in the church.”*³⁵⁸ (However, the Yao groups of the church in the Machinga and Mangochi areas do not take such a strong stand against whites and were much friendlier towards us.) We have already studied how the citadel of faith healing fell to pieces through the influence which foreign missionaries wielded in the Pentecostal churches. The same must be said about their theological training. Pentecostal Bible colleges in the country were founded by missionaries; many of them are still run by them. The Zionists noted these changes. They caused them to dig in all the deeper in their doctrinal trenches.

There have been occasional visits by missionaries and other church leaders from abroad. The outcome of those is all very telling about the Zionists’ attitude. In 1937, remembers Archbishop Magagula (13), who at

³⁵⁷ Terence O. Ranger, *State and Church in Southern Rhodesia, 1919-1939*, Harare: Historical Association of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, n.d., p. 4.

³⁵⁸ Int. E.G. Zingwa naBengo, Bishop L.Z. Bengo, A. Julius, Dzipirana, Ntcheu, 17. 8. 2005.

that time still prayed with the CCACZ, white missionaries of Zion came to Blantyre, they also visited the headquarters in Ntcheu. They came from the CCACZ in South Africa. Seeking cooperation with the government, the missionaries tried to have the church registered with the colonial administration. “*But we Malawians refused this.*”³⁵⁹ One fear was that the government could tax the churches; the overriding reason was that Zionists have never wanted to be in anybody’s books, especially those of an occupying foreign force.

The one exception of missionary acceptance, successful to a certain degree, are the workers sent by Grace Missionary Church *and* the Christ Community Church (formerly named: Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion) in Zion, Illinois.³⁶⁰ Because of their historical link, the American church recognizes an open door among the many African worshippers calling themselves Zionists. They work with an organisation called ZEMA; its missionaries see Malawian Zionists as potential converts. Greg and Carlene Seghers live and minister among the Zulu in South Africa, yet they have visited and reached out to Zionists in other countries. Seghers found open doors among the CCACZ and other denominations in Malawi when he told them that he comes from the birthplace of Zionism in Illinois, USA. He used to come every year to Malawi, often in the company of other missionaries, but visits have been less frequent since 2005.³⁶¹ His mission is evangelicalism, thus the enrollment of Zionists at the Evangelical Bible College of Malawi, sponsored by Seghers. The CCACZ, during the reign of Bishop John Dambo, would hide their drums and richly ornamented apparel once the white missionaries from South Africa announced themselves. During those ‘donor visits,’ (as the Malawians called it) *malingaka* turned *bata*. The schism of 2004 (recorded at the end of chapter 3) when the Zion Church (30) came out of the CCACZ, is blamed on these missionaries. The old timers call Mlangeni’s church *Zion ya Azungu*, (the White Man’s Zion.) They are, however, not the main reason.

³⁵⁹ Int. Bishop Pearson Fasinesi Lipenga Magagula, Kunthawira, Chileka, 12.5.2005.

³⁶⁰ <http://www.ccczion.org/missions/missions.htm>. 21.1.2010.

<http://gmczion.org/page.aspx?id=9>. 21.1.2010.

³⁶¹ Bishop Moffat P. Lichapa, Zion ya Bata (2), Ntcheu, 14.10.2007.

The missionaries' visits were too sporadic to mount any strong influence. The Zion Church (30) is a rejuvenation and theological reformation of Zionism in Malawi, as their more tolerant stand on biomedicine and other issues show.

The missionary element can be of help to overcome ethnic prejudice in an African church.³⁶² Zionism seems not to have been in much need for this, since it is surprisingly multi-ethnic in the country. The initial concentration among the Ngoni was not because of excluding others, but because of several positive reasons as we have seen. Since then, the movement has spread to all parts of the country. The settlement in Salima (2) has a fine mixture of Yao, Ngoni and Chewa people. Other churches like the Entopia Zion (14) and the ZCC (8) transcend lingual and ethnic barriers, making them national churches in the true sense. However, smaller groups retain their local colour and oftentimes outsiders cannot be established among them. The Ifa-ifa Church (4) is a Chewa stronghold. The ZCC (8) congregation in Ndirande, Blantyre, is made up of people from Nkhotaikota District, who love to sing their hymns in Chitonga.³⁶³ Such pockets of ethnicity can be found with all kinds of churches in the country.³⁶⁴

Starting from its cradle among the *machona*, Zionism in Malawi has been influenced and impacted from abroad. Transnationalism as a force has certainly waned, since the economic conditions that favoured it on a large scale have changed. Zionist congregations with roots in South Africa or Zimbabwe have usually lost contact to their mother churches, although they always expressed interest when I mentioned that I had heard about a church with a similar name somewhere else.

Many denominations have cross-border contacts and a good number of Malawian Zionist churches have extended their parishes into

³⁶² Hany Longwe, *Identity by Dissociation: The First Group to Secede from Chilembwe's Church: A History of Peter Kalembe and the Achewa Providence Industrial Mission*, MA, Zomba: University of Malawi, 2000, pp. 28, 35, 128ff. Ulf Strohhorn, *Pentecostalism in Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere 2005, pp. 115f.

³⁶³ Minister Chilowa Banda, ZCC, sermon, Majiga, Ndirande, Blantyre, 9.7.2006.

³⁶⁴ Ulf Strohhorn, *Pentecostalism in Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere 2005, p. 127.

Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. The Zion Christian Prophecy Church (11) has a strong following in Zambia. 12000 adherents in Malawi and 8000 in Zambia speak of a thorough establishment in both countries.³⁶⁵ Because of this, the highest council in the church is called *International Executive Committee*. The Entopia Church (14) with Archbishop Kanjere has branched into Mozambique, in the areas around Tete, Chiweza and Dowa, south of Ngabu. The Archbishop visits these churches from time to time, but has to speak through an interpreter because the members are predominantly from the Nyungwi group. It is a remarkable cultural and organizational crossing by a church with comparatively little means.³⁶⁶

The Zion Christian Church (8) is different in this regard, since it is controlled by the South African mother church. Its sheer size in some provinces in South Africa in combination with Malawian men still seeking employment there has up to this day kept the *machona* element alive. This is one contributing factor why the ZCC (8) still grows, in contrast to most other Zionist denominations in Malawi which register only shrinkage. The bishop is the strongest symbol of the church's identity, not only in South Africa. Edward Lekganyane (son and successor of the founder) visited Malawi in 1962 and was apparently impressed with the growth of the church. The church sends reports regularly to its headquarters and the *Minister*, the national leader, can only be appointed by Lekganyane.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁵ Int. Archbishop Stanley L. Hara, Archbishop McLaud T. Kacheche and Archbishop Paul S. Kapenga Hara, Mthebama headquarters, 13.7.2005.

³⁶⁶ Int. Archbishop S. Kanjere, Chileka, 23.2.2005.

³⁶⁷ Minister Chilowa Banda, ZCC, *sermon*, Majiga, Ndirande, Blantyre, 9.7.2006.

Conclusions

“Auhtority now demands more than court
ceremonialism to justify it;
it demands “reasons” - that is, doctrine.”³⁶⁸

The most important distinction between spirit churches and other denominations is the spiritual field, a mystic location which has been described time and again in these pages. This study shows how black Christians in the USA experienced God’s nearness as a group. From there, this form of Christianity was introduced to Africa, already at the beginning charged with mystic elements and a good dose of Africanness. Zionists and Pentecostals have this common heritage, they are socially compounded mystics. Albrecht’s analysis is to some degree revealing about Pentecostal spirituality, e.g. ritual places and times, which he so aptly defines. The weakness, however, lies in the anthropological angle, from which he looks at an overwhelmingly spiritual phenomenon.³⁶⁹ His ‘ritual field’ is called ‘spiritual field’ in this study. I have used terms like *rite* and *ritual* for the description of cultural elements among the Zionists, but not for the spiritual field as such. For the field is overall mystic and only in part ritualistic. It is entirely immaterial. It might be erected in part by the interaction of the participants, but other levels are past the social domain: they are psychological and spiritual.

Hollenweger explained the events at Azusa Street in 1906 not as caused by demons (some evangelicals thought so), neither as an outpouring of the Holy Spirit (as the Pentecostals claim) but as a enthusiastic “*black outburst*,” which is not uncommon among them.³⁷⁰ Such an explanation has several weaknesses. Apparently, Hollenweger

³⁶⁸ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, 2001, p. 186.

³⁶⁹ Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.

³⁷⁰ Walter J. Hollenweger, *Enthusiastisches Christentum. Die Pfingstbewegung in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Wuppertal: Theologischer Verlag Rolf Brockhaus, 1969, p. 25.

has chosen a sociological and phenomenological explanation over a theological analysis. Moreover, his interpretation leaves the reader yet without a definition. So, Pentecostalism happened among Black people, but *what* was it? Almost thirty years later, the emeritus professor had somehow mellowed; his vision has been expanded, not least because of his exposure to the multiracial community in Birmingham. He clearly sees a 'black root' in global Pentecostalism and gives syncretism an apology at the end of the chapter.³⁷¹

It is the task of the theologian to look beyond the social and anthropological issues, which are around the spiritual field, and probe into the mystic encounters which individuals make after all interaction and physical movement has stopped. Only then does the concept of faith healing receive a solid foundation. In the same vein, the observer is cautioned not to confuse Zion's mystic experiences with a form of sacramentalism. As much as I welcome anthropological research and sociological viewpoints for Pentecostals, AICs and Zionists, spiritual phenomena cannot only be analyzed in such a fashion. I am therefore convinced that the term 'spiritual field' qualifies best as a description of Zionist *and* Pentecostal mysticism.

The spiritual field is established again and again by dancing, singing and praying among the Zionists. Once there, it becomes manifest through quite a number of phenomena, with physical healing towering above all else. It would be interesting for further research to study other spiritual fields, e.g. fields erected through modern worship music among Pentecostals and Charismatics.

Zionism in Malawi is a spiritual and cultural religious movement, which for some time appealed to a wide segment of the population. It rang all the bells for a Ngoni growing up in the 1930s or 1940s in Ntcheu district. Its most distinctive features provided sense, if not health, moral security and a good degree of personal independence. It has been a form of Christianity that *worked* for the people. In a few instances, for example through the booklet by Chimalo, the observer can still today feel a sense

³⁷¹ Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism. Origins and Developments Worldwide*, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997.

of triumphalism, a conviction that the dynamic and miraculous story of the Acts of the Apostles had found a successor among Malawians. The discovery that Christianity is working faith, over and against their white colonialists, must have been a surprising and liberating experience to the Zionists. In a few places in Ntcheu District, Zionism is still the prevalent form of religion in the year 2012.

By making use of hundreds of pages I have tried to unfold that not one factor suffices to explain the emergence of Zionism in Malawi and the individual conversions to it. Political interpretations for this come mainly from South Africa, where the AICs *and* their researchers are far more politically charged than in Malawi. They have a point, but most of their interpretations will not hold true in this country, especially if a political theory aspires to become an encompassing hypothesis.³⁷² Malawians adapted to distress and sickness by becoming Zionists on individual levels, their thinking was not on political change.³⁷³ Functionalist theories, such as the Social Disorganization Theory and the Deprivation Theory,³⁷⁴ help to answer the question why Zionism made wide inroads among the Ngoni and not with other ethnic groups. Those opposing the Deprivation Theory would need to reconsider their stand in the case of exilic religious movements. Both Sundkler³⁷⁵ and Kiernan³⁷⁶ have made their contributions in this field, which can be critically applied to Malawi's Zionists, too. Other theories have economy as their governing angle. Kruss' Marxist interpretation of AICs is an interesting read, but, again, omits too many cultural and spiritual issues inherent to Zionism.³⁷⁷ I have been inspired by Naudé's approach to construct a theology from oral

³⁷² Michael Bourdillion, *Religion and Society. A Text for Africa*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1990, p. 272.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

³⁷⁴ Robert Garner, "The Future of African Independent Churches in South Africa," in: Dawid Venter, ed., *Engaging Modernity*, Westport: Praeger, 2004, p. 201.

³⁷⁵ Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, London: OUP, 1948. 2nd ed. 1961. *Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists*, London: OUP, 1976.

³⁷⁶ James P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990.

³⁷⁷ Glenda Kruss, *Religion, Class and Culture: Indigenous Churches in South Africa, with Special Reference to Zionist-Apostolics*, MA, University of Cape Town, 1985.

sources.³⁷⁸ This did not work with lyrics as in his case, but much could be gleaned from sermons. However, in my understanding such a restricted approach is insufficient for the construction of an entire theology. Psychological works, starting with Peltzer's descriptions from Malawi, are a valuable contribution to our understanding of certain aspects of Zionist life.³⁷⁹

This history shows that Christianity in the form of Zionism has supplanted kinship bonds and village ties in a society, whose traditional social centres had been ruptured. Many former markers of cultural identity, such as funerals, weddings and initiation ceremonies now happen under the auspices of the churches. Although Zionism is a culture, a social niche, a dance style, a dress code, a health system and an economic slot, I see it primarily as a church, which must be understood spiritually. Man is a helpless religious being. The fact is that, contrary to Europe, one's religious affiliation is chosen in Malawi, whereas in Europe one is either born with it or it is (increasingly) not chosen at all.³⁸⁰ Secularization processes differ considerably between the continents.

Is it true that industrialization leads to secularization, as some have claimed?³⁸¹ Does the modernization of a society in Africa mean that it will become opposed to Christianity?³⁸² Such generalizations must be rewritten in light of the spiritual dynamics prevalent in Africa. Several factors, which we have seen in the *machona's* fate, come into play. In Africa, the majority of people had not had an education based on the Enlightenment's achievements; modern life has not changed their underlying spiritual worldview. Neither were the first generations made shareholders of industrialization's material blessings, which *could* distract

³⁷⁸ Piet Naudé, *The Zionist Christian Church in South Africa, A Case Study in Oral Theology*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995

³⁷⁹ Karl Peltzer, *Some Contributions of Traditional Healing Practises towards Psychosocial Health Care in Malawi*, PhD, Universität Hannover, Sozialwissenschaftliche Fakultät, 1986, p. 222.

³⁸⁰ Inger Furseth, Pål Repstad, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion*, Aldershot: Ashgate, p. 90, 2007.

³⁸¹ Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, New York: Random House, 1990, p. 109.

³⁸² Fenella Cannell, *The Anthropology of Christianity*, Durham: Duke University, 2007, p. 32.

from spiritual views.³⁸³ As the discussion unfolds, more needs to be researched in this area, yet we can safely assume from our study that the beginnings of industrialization have not secularized Africa.

Zionism in Malawi is therefore to be interpreted as an apt stand against secularization during their day and age. (It is not the last stand against secularization, the Pentecostals have taken over as torch-bearers from the Zionists.) The Zionist churches have been a counterforce in the teeth of urbanization, demystification and materialism. The movement evolved in societies which were ruled by white people, both in Malawi and other countries in Africa. Many of those overlords professed to be Christians. Their faith, however, was secularized, in that it (a.) offered no holistic solution to the spiritual as well as physical needs of Africans, (b.) legitimized in many cases the political oppression and economic exploitation of the people and (c.) demystified the African worldview even more by claiming that the supernatural works in the Bible were either fiction or not any longer valid for our time. Zionism, on the other hand, sought to check those processes by offering physical as well as spiritual solutions, creating its own enclaves of relative economic and political freedom and strongly pronouncing the wonderous and unfathomable elements of its faith.

Zionism is not the same movement which Alexander Dowie founded in Zion, Illinois. At the beginning of the research, Bishop Chaluluka's bold statement that the church hasn't changed at all since it came from the USA sounded nothing but wishful thinking.³⁸⁴ However, I have come to understand what he meant. An unaltered church provides legitimation to their theology and culture. It is all rooted in God's never-changing counsel, sacred "*with a cosmic frame of reference.*"³⁸⁵ Of course, every church changes in the course of eighty years. Chaluluka's statement makes more sense if we look at two other churches which were Zion's companions for some time.

³⁸³ Jack D. Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion*, New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 251.

³⁸⁴ Int. Bishop Foster B. Chaluluka (3), Whwayo, 14.6.2003.

³⁸⁵ Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, New York: Random House, 1990, p. 33.

First of all, the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion, Illinois, the mother church, went through several splits; all surviving branches have eventually turned evangelical. Moreover, the difference to their African name-bearers could not be made clearer than by the Americans sending out missionaries to this continent to bring the Africans 'back' into the fold. It is not the African Zionists who have danced themselves out of the box of conventional evangelicalism, for they have never been there, but the mother church that changed by dropping its prophetic element and its strong emphasis on faith healing.

Another church movement, which led Bishop Chauluka to his statement about Zion's unchanging character, are the Pentecostals. If Zionists are seen as belonging to the Pentecostal ferment in this country, and by their origins such an assumption will be right, then they are to be grouped as one in a cluster of five: Zionists were the first to arrive on the scene (1922), followed by the *machona* Pentecostal churches (1926), missionary initiated Pentecostal churches came next, in the 1940s. Charismatic fellowships and denominations were fourth in Malawi and, finally, neo-Pentecostal independent denominations, which have mushroomed in the cities from the 1980s until today.³⁸⁶

It emerges from this study that Zionism is the most archaic form of Pentecostalism in this country. The Pentecostals changed their healing theology, their refusal of bio-medical help, their rural remoteness and their apathy against intramural pastoral training. Pentecostals are in general internationally linked or they aspire to be, while the Zionists have in most cases lost the connections they had had with the churches in southern Africa and the USA. It is precisely their ability to adapt that has made the Pentecostals such a force in this country, and other countries, whereas Zion's inability to do the same is the main reason of their decline.

Hefner argues that to be successful (to become a 'world religion') churches need to be able to institutionalize the propagation and control

³⁸⁶ Ulf Strohehn, *Pentecostalism in Malawi, A History of the AFM*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005, pp. 10f.

of religious knowledge.³⁸⁷ Moreover, they cannot let their intellectual property stew in its own juice. Religious groups need to establish interdependencies with non-religious thinkers, in the areas of political, economical and theological thought, too. Failure to reach out into the non-religious realm can lead to the church's societal side-lining and eventual fossilization. The current stage of Zionism in Malawi serves as an example to Hefner's theory.

At least in their embryonic forms and early childhoods, Zionism and Pentecostalism are part of one family. Because of this, the entire study of oral roots and Black heritage must be readdressed, for Zion is happily visual. Hollenweger's identification of a black oral root remains factual, but needs further qualification because the black root is not necessarily only oral, as this study about an African church *in Africa* has shown.³⁸⁸ Pentecostalism's aural hallmark is not the only channel of communication inherent to it; it originated in the banishment or absence of all other means of expression during slavery. This could lead to liberation into more colourfulness among the Pentecostals. It is further important to readdress the rootage of 'emotionalism' within Pentecostal and Zionist churches. Methodism carried those elements, but the African connection was the freshest and most direct link to the early Pentecostals in the USA and, *ipsi facto*, to the first African converts to Zion on this continent.

It is best to understand Zionism in Malawi as a phenomenon on its own. They are not a modern form of traditional African religion, nor can they any longer be identified with their evangelical and Pentecostal cousins.³⁸⁹ Historically Zion is a part of the Pentecostal cluster, but the differences between Zionists and Pentecostals have become so pronounced over the last decades that it would be wrong to continue to band them together at this time. One strong indicator for this is the

³⁸⁷ Robert W. Hefner, *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation*, Berkeley: University of California, 1993, p. 19.

³⁸⁸ Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism. Origins and Developments Worldwide*, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997, pp. 18ff.

³⁸⁹ Karl Peltzer, *Some Contributions of Traditional Healing Practises towards Psychosocial Health Care in Malawi*, PhD, Universität Hannover, Sozialwissenschaftliche Fakultät, 1986, p. 56.

severed bond of fellowship, which had once existed between Zion and Pentecost in this country. Nowadays, both camps regard one another with suspicion and doubts whether the others are truly saved or not. I therefore use the term *cousins* to describe their mutual remoteness and historical kinship. In Africa, however, cousins are brothers and, even better, in eternity, we will have as many brothers and sisters as the Father in Heaven has children.

Bishop Chauluka's statement about the unchanging nature of Zion in Malawi is viewed as a merit in the eyes of the older generation. Yet their inability to change has brought the Zionists into trouble. Zionism provided cosmological meaning to the first generations of worshippers in Malawi, but that world has been shattered by inner and outer factors. The churches have come from religious and cultural dominance among the Maseko Ngoni to a place where they are hardly more than a subculture. A good number of church headquarters are in a dilapidated condition, their former glory has not been renewed. Leadership transitions prove to be difficult, hardly any church has a functioning mechanism in place for it.

Zionists are in several ways caught between the times. The movement as a whole does not grow any longer. Membership figures are declining. This has to do with the rural location and character of the churches, too. Contrary to South Africa, Malawian Zionism has not gained a foothold in the country's urban centers.³⁹⁰ With an aged leadership, tucked away in their rural havens, the movements have in general been out of touch with Malawian 'modernity.' In many cases, they have lost the next generation when those sons and daughters moved away. But more than infrastructure, it's a quest of urban and rural cultures. Zionists are slow to react to changes; some churches seem like an anachronism. Most of them resist outer influences with a stern face. They suffer from backwardness and charges of backwardness. So far, self-containment has been the dogma, yet they have to open up to reforming and rejuvenating processes if the current trend is to be reversed.

³⁹⁰ James Kiernan, "African Independent Churches and Modernity", in: Dawid Venter, ed., *Engaging Modernity*, Westport: Praeger, 2004, p. 53.

Moreover, numerical growth and decline of religious groups is the result of competition in a pluralistic market.³⁹¹ Zionist churches in the suburban areas attract only a limited number of people in comparison to other spirit-churches in Malawi. What is missing? Three elements, which can be seen in other churches that define the borders of Zionism, have not happened to such a degree within Zionism, thus contributing to the movement's inertness. The first element is transnationalism and the corresponding feeling to belong to an international body of believers. The ZCC (8) is the exemption to the rule and therefore continues to be a Zionist church still growing in Malawi. This means that an ongoing *machona* element helps the church to develop. Even better than this is the second element, the establishment of leadership training centres. Colleges have helped the Pentecostals in Malawi to not rely on erratic waves of *machona* returns. In contrast to the Zionists, the Pentecostals are open to education and see no great danger in material wealth. All in all, Pentecostalism appears as a less demanding form of a spirit-church in Malawi. It certainly meets the same needs, but does so with an undeniable compliance with mainstream society, not against it.

Whereas the Pentecostals have subtracted from Zion's urban and conservative clientel, the *Vapastoli* have done so with people whose liking is a more experimental and enthusiastic form of religion.³⁹² Some Zionists nowadays take a softer stand towards biomedicine, while the *Vapastoli* in general still demand an absolute refusal. This means that the *Vapastoli* have entered a similar role in regard to the Zionists as the Charismatics have been to the Pentecostals.³⁹³ To the right of the Pentecostals are the Evangelicals, to their left we find the the Charismatics and neo-Pentecostals. For the Zionists, the Pentecostal and Ethiopian churches are to their right, while the *Vapastoli* are on their left.

³⁹¹ Sharon K. Houseknecht, Jerry G. Pankhurst, eds., *Family, Religion and Social Change in Diverse Societies*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 18.

³⁹² Lucy S. Banda, *The Masowe and Maranke Apostles in Malawi: Dynamics of the Entry, Growth, Development and Impact, 1950-2002*, MA, Zomba: University of Malawi, 2003, pp. 5, 104.

³⁹³ Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999, p. 77.

In an overall trend, a pattern becomes visible. In Malawi, those people drawn to an independent form of Christianity found their first home in the Ethiopian type of churches. To many, the issue of independence and Africanness might have been the determining factor. Later, more people joined the Zionists or, as we have seen, Ethiopian type churches adopted Zionist elements. Independence was not the main driving factor any longer, but a spiritual thirst, a hunger to experience God's immanence. In the current stage, Zionism has been relieved of its duty by the Pentecostals as champion of spirit-type Christianity in the country. Similar trends can be observed in other African countries with Zionist and Pentecostal denominations.³⁹⁴

Yet questions remain. This study was written during a time of economic growth and visible development in Malawi. While there is much catching up to do with industrialized nations, sooner or later the question will emerge how religion will feature in a wealthier Malawi. And hopefully such a question will be asked in many African countries, too. Does capitalism lead to theological liberalization? What marks will urbanization leave on Zionism? Will established democratic principles from the political arena be taken over into the churches? How will a better medical care reflect on Zion's health system?

One question loomed in my mind as I approached the end of the fieldwork and started to sort things out and write it all down. While the movement is still strong in the country, with at least 100,000 adherents, the outlook cannot be anything but bleak. I could not but think that much of their spirituality and culture described in these pages is but of temporary nature. Is Zionism in Malawi like a dying language? Does it have rights? And is this book one of the last recordings?

³⁹⁴ Paul Cummergen, "Zionism and Politics in Swaziland", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Leiden: Brill, 2000, vol. 30, no. 3, p. 382.

Bibliography

Interviews

1. *Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion*

Newa, Bishop Frackson Nickson Joseph; Msampha, *Mlevi* Charles; Chisamba, *Mlevi* Livison (M'jomba); Newa, Binalison (class secretary); Newa, Elisa (prophetess), Joseph village, T/A Chimutu, Lilongwe, 14.5.2008.

Walasi, Yacobe, Lumbadzi, 28.4.2008.

Kaulimbo, *Mlevi*, Bangwe, 18.10.2006.

Mpatse Mrs. Estere, Ndirande, 12.10.2006, 10.3.2010, 29.6.2010.

Jada, *Mlevi* Frank, Bangwe, 17.10.2006.

Chimdipiti, *Mlevi*, Ulongwe class in Balaka, 10.10.2009.

Chimbetete, Moses A.; Chikuse, Jessie; Phiri, James Chinguluwe; Govati, 31.3.2006.

Phiri, James Chinguluwe; Chikuse, Zagwazatha M'gwagwa, Tchona village, chief Nsamala, Balaka, 4.6.2008.

Gomeza, Bishop Thompson, Ndirande, 20.10.2009.

2. *The Zion Church ya Bata*

Mlauzi, M.G.P.; Mbewe, H.E.N.; Chisale, J.J.M.; Salima, 22.1.2003.

Office, Jameson; Mbewe, N.; Chimunga, K.; Kenamu, B.; Nantholo, W.; Masinja, J.; Salima, 29.7.2007.

Kayenda, Bishop T.E.W., Chiumbe and Msangu, Salima, 28.7.2007.

Lichapa, Moffat P., Kamphata, 14.10.2007.

3. *Holy Apostolic Church in Zion*

Chaluluka, Bishop Foster B.; Chaluluka, Mrs. F.; Nkhoma, *General Mlevi* L.N.; Mbewe, L.; Sagona Chisale A.F; (3), Whwayo, 14.6.2003.

Chaluluka, Mrs. F.; Gama, *Mlevi* R.L.; Mbewe, *Mlevi* L.; Makanani, *Mlevi*, P;
Whwayo, 6.11.2005.

Mtokoma, Mrs. Falesi; Nyamulani, Mr. Paulo; Chibani, Mr. Amosi; Whwayo,
10.03.2010

Dambo, Mr. Lastin, Nyambadwe, 11.11.2004.

4. Ifa-ifa Zion Christian Church

Sitima, Daniel; Kanyamphula, Harod; M'gubo village, Mkukula, Dowa, 6.10.2008.

Kanyamphula, Harod; Laison, Chenjerani; Lumbadzi trading centre and Mkwinda
village, Kayembe, Dowa, 28., 29.5.2008.

5. Jordan Zion ya Bata Church

Kawenga Bishop Mateyu, Dzoole, Dowa, 12.9.2009.

Kawenga Bishop Mateyu, Nguluyanawambe hill, 7.10. 2008.

Diyele *Mdindo* Sentisimenti, Lumbadzi, 27.5.2008.

Diyele *Mdindo* Sentisimenti, M'gubo, Dowa, 7.10.2008.

6. Zion ya Kang'oma

Mtema Bishop, Kasiya, 8.10.2008.

7. Apostolic Faith Church

Bengo, Bishop Lewis Z.; Bengo, Edita G. Zingwa; Julius, A.; Dzipirana, Ntcheu,
7,18.8.2005.

Kachotsa, Justin, Mahata, L.; Mtabwa, M.; Mwalasi, Machinga, 5.3.2006.

8. Zion Christian Church

M'gomezulu, Minister R.B., Blantyre, 29.6.2003.

9. Entopia Zion Church

Ngwenyama, Bishop Fraction Msalawatha, Mbemba, 13.4.2006.

10. New Jerusalem Zion Church

Ngodzo, Bishop Zamajeza, Salima, 13.8.2003;

Njazi, Bishop Mackford Kenward, M'gona, Lilongwe, 9.2.2004.

11. Zion Christian Prophecy Church

Hara, Archbishop Stanley L.; McLaud, Archbishop T. Kacheche; Hara, Archbishop Paul S. Kapenga, Mthebama headquarters, 13.7.2005.

12. Chipiliro Zion Church

Dzonzi, Bishop L., Sumani village, Manase, Blantyre, 2.7.2003.

Ngodzo, Bishop Wells, Mazonda village, 11.1.2005.

13. Christian Apostolic Sabbath Church in Zion

Magagula, Bishop Pearson Fasinesi Lipenga, Kunthawira, Chileka, 4.3.2004; 12.5.2005.

Chimpango, Bishop B., Bwanje, Ntcheu, 4.3.2004.

14. Entopia Zion Church

Kanjere, Archbishop Satifiketi, Mwansambo village, Chileka, 23.2.2005; 14.4.2005; 23.4.2005; 22.6.2005.

Kanjere, Archbishop Satifiketi, Ligopolo, Bishop Rex, Collin Gwirize; Mrs. Marigeni Nangodzo; Mrs. Chrisy Ligopolo, Mwansambo village, Chileka, 25.2.2010.

15. The New Zion Church

Makoko, Bishop Payambe, Kaluzi, 28.2.2006.

16. Apositioli Zion Church

Kandodo, Bishop Goodson Gabriel, M'gundo, Chileka, 8.8.2004; 29.4.2005.

17. Mpingo wa Atumwi

Ngwimbi, Mr., Zomba Central Hospital, 20.6.2004.

Chigona, Mlevi Dickson, Manja, 27.2.2006.

Dimba, Bishop Kaelama B., Ntcheu, 12.1.2005.

18. Zion Sabbath Church

Dimba, Mr. Kaelama, Bwanje Trading Centre, 4.8.2004.

19. New Jerusalem Zion Church

Saguga, Bishop Sporo, Mrs Liwiza Saguga, Jordan village, 6.3.2008.

Mzowa, Mr.; Saguga, Bishop Sporo, Bwanje, 3.3.2006.

Malopa, Salatieli; Nkhoma, Mlevi Francis, M'gona, Lilongwe, 21.8.2007.

20. Zion Sabbath Kenani Church

Chirikumbuyo, Bishop Samson, Bwanje, 12.1.2005.

21. Sinai Zion Church

Kalombola, Bishop Kuchilowa, Chileka, Kalombola village, 13.4.2004; 22.4.2005.

22. Zion Sabbath Church by Manong'a

Kaelama, B., Bwanje, 4.8.2004.

23. Zion Sabbath Church by Phiri

Dimba, Bishop Kawerama Belson (Entopia Zion Church), Chikadya village, Ntcheu, 12.1.2005.

24. Zion Sabbath Church by Ndau

Kaelama, B., Bwanje, 4.8.2004.

25. Samaria Zion Church

Zalengela Chawango, General Mlevi Nixon, Manjawira, 23.1.2004; 14.10.2008.

Zalengela Chawango, General Mlevi Nixon, Ndirande, Blantyre, 15.3.2009.

26. New Bible Zion Church

Kanjere, Bishop Setifiketi, (Entopia Zion Church), Mwansambo village, 5.3.2004.

27. Apositoli Zion Sabbath Church

Kamwendo, Bishop Gresan, Ndirande, 12.11.2003.

28. Entopia Zion City Church

Msalawatha Ngwenyama, Bishop Fraction, Mbemba, Neno, 13.5.2004; 13.4.2006.

29. Chipulumutso Zion Church

Kasuzo Phiri, Bishop Square Binosi; Phiri, Harry Patson, Dombale, 1.3.2006.

30. Zion Church

Mlangeni, National General Secretary Eston Thomas; Mrs. Mlangeni, Ndirande, 13.1.2006; 7.9.2006; 12.8.2007.

Political Authorities

Senior Chief Kachindamoto, Kazembe Kayira, in: Piergiorgio Gamba, ed., *The Lamp*, no. 67, 9/2007, Balaka: Montfort Media, p. 17.

Group Village Headman Matope, Safarao, Ndirande, 1.2.2006.

Pastor Mchenga, Safarao, Ndirande, 1.1.2006.

Pentecostal Churches

Dauya, Pastor Ereck E., AFM, Blantyre, 14.8.2004; 2.12.2004; 21.5.2010.

Kalambule, Elijah L., AoG, Blantyre, 5.5.2004.

Kulanga, Rev. Wellem B., AFM, Ndirande, 8.3.2010.

Maclean, Pastor Dick, AFM, Ngodzi, 28.9.2000.

Phiri, Sapala, AoG, Blantyre, 3.11.2004.

Vapostoli

Nalunji, Pastor, God's Message Apostle Church, Chimwankhunda, 17.10.2002.

Mpochera, Bishop Albert, God's Message Apostle Church, Chileka, 25.5.2005.

Kanyaza, Mrs.; Dzimbiri, Mrs., Seventh Day Apostoli Church of Mbale Mbuu, Blantyre, 24.3.2004.

Mpisamanja, Mr. Ezra, Seventh Day Apostoli Church of Mbale Mbuu, Safarao, Ndirande, 24.2.2005.

Zulu, Pastor, Vapostoli of Johane Maranke, Blantyre, Ndirande, 2.9.2009.

Other Ethiopian or AIC

Tembo, Mr., Watchman Healing Mission (*Ine wa Yehova ndi Mikaeli*), Nkhata Bay, 6.6.2004.

Howa, Mr., Watchman Healing Mission (*Ufumu wa Yehova ndi Mikaeli*), Thondwe, 29.7.2004.

Steve Hayes, Pretoria, 13.12.2004.

Sermons

Chilowa Banda, ZCC (8), Majiga, Ndirande, Blantyre, 9.7.2006.

Joseph Jimu, Zion ya bata (2), Chidothe, Mlumbe, Zomba, 16.7.2006.

Mlevi Kalulu, CCACZ, Kampala, Blantyre, 2.7.2006.

Mlevi Masina, CCACZ, Kampala, Blantyre, 2.7.2006.

Mlevi Mbewe, HACZ (3), Chemussa, 11.6.2006.

Mlevi Mtambalika, HACZ (3), Chemussa, 11.6.2006.

Mlevi Taison, , HACZ (3), Chemussa, 11.6.2006.

Mlevi Tembo, CCACZ, Kampala, Blantyre, 2.7.2006

Sources with Direct Reference to Zionism in Malawi

- Administrative Council of the Christian Catholic Church, ed., *Zomwe Timakhulupirira [This We Believe]*, Zion, Illinois: Christian Catholic Church, 1993.
- Chakanza, Joseph C., *An Annotated List of African Instituted Church 1900 – 1981*, Zomba: Sources for the Study of Religion in Malawi, 1983.
- Chimalo, Wikilifi, *Chiyambi cha Mpingo wa Zion m'Chaka cha 1930*, Lilongwe: Likuni Press, 1979.
- Kapito, Lucy K., *Women in African Instituted Churches in Ndirande and Mbayani Townships, Blantyre City*, BA, Zomba: University of Malawi, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, 1995.
- Kazokoko, Stansfield, *Malinkaka Church: A Case Study of an Independent Church which Seceded from the CCACZ*, Zomba: Chancellor College, Department of TRS, 1980.
- Nindi, John, *Chirimba Christian Apostolic Church in Zion, Its Establishment, Organization and Beliefs*, Zomba: Kachere, 2006.
- MNIME (National Initiative for Mission and Evangelism), *Report of Survey in Zomba Area*, nd.
- Parrett, John "Religious Independency in Nyasaland," in: *African Studies, Quarterly Journal*, Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University, vol. 38, no. 2, 1979.
- Peltzer, Karl, *Some Contributions of Traditional Healing Practises towards Psychosocial Health Care in Malawi*, PhD, Universität Hannover, Sozialwissenschaftliche Fakultät, 1986.
- Strohbehn, Ulf, *Pentecostalism in Malawi, A History of the Apostolic Faith Mission*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005.
- Robert L. Wishlade, *Sectarianism in Southern Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1965.

Archives

File, *Apostolic Faith Mission*, file no. 1392/1926, NAM.

Application for to Start a Branch of the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church,
Written to E.F. Colville, Provincial Commissioner, 12.3.1923, NAM.

Baker, Colin A., *The Government Medical Service in Malawi: An Administrative History, 1891 – 1974*, Medical History, 1975, vol. 13, pp. 296 - 311. NAM.

Chief Commissioner of Police, *Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion*, 13.11.1924, n. d. NAM.

Conference of the Holy Apostolic Church in Zion, *Constitution and Bye-Laws*, Daggakraal, 26.3.1937.

Description of a Native Immigrant, John Wesley Dingiswayo, n. d. NAM.

File, The Christian Apostolic Church in Zion, 9/1940, NAM.

John G. Phillips, Form of Application by Native Churches or Religious Bodies for Sites or other Privileges Depending upon Government Recognition, Holy Apostolic Church in Zion, Johannesburg, 12.4.1926. NaoSA, File NTS, 1457, 154/214, Part 1.

Letter from CCACZ, Johannesburg, to the Secretary for Native Affairs, Pretoria, 2.8.1917, NaoSA, file no. 1386/14/387.

Letter from C.H. Wade, Acting Chief Secretary to the Government, to the General Secretary, The Apostolic Faith Mission of SA, 17.11.1926, *Apostolic Faith Mission*, file no. 1392/1926, NAM.

Letter from E.F. Colville, Provincial Commissioner, to the ZEM at Mitsidi, Blantyre, 12.3.1923, NAM.

Letter from Gerhard Erasmus to Eduard Wendland, AFM Malawi, minutes, 23.11.1984.

Letter from W.W. Hoy, General Manager of South African Railways & Harbours, to J.G.Phillips, Johannesburg, 18.8.1925. NaoSA, File NTS, 1457, 154/214, Part 1.

Letter from Francis M. Royall, Zion City, Ill., to J.G.Phillips, Johannesburg, 29.11.1923. NaoSA, File NTS, 1457, 154/214, Part 1.

Letter from the H.J. Taylor, Chief Native Commissioner, Pretoria, to the Chief Native Commissioner in Salisbury, 22.11.1922. NaoSA, file no. N.2714/22/6602/6681.

Letter from John G. Phillips, CCACZ, to the Native Commissioner, Johannesburg, 27.8.1923. NaoSA, File NTS, 1457, 154/214, Part 1.

Letter from John G. Phillips to the Officer in Charge at the Native Affairs Dept., Blantyre, Johannesburg, 6.12.1922, NAM.

Letter from J.M. Mwelass, CCACZ, Johannesburg, to the Secretary of Native Affairs, Pretoria, 8.11.1923. NaoSA, File NTS, 1457, 154/214, Part 1.

Letter from the Director of Native Labor to the Secretary for Native Affairs, Pretoria, 14.10.1924. NaoSA, File NTS, 1457, 154/214, Part 1.

Letter from Van Buren Shumaker to the American Consul C.N.P. Cross, Johannesburg, 16.7.1924, NAM.

Letter from Van Buren Shumaker to the Minister of the Interior, Pretoria, 29.11.1924. NaoSA, File NTS, 1457, 154/214, Part 1.

Marker, P., *Immigration – Natives*, Fort Manning, 2.12.1924, NAM.

Provincial Commissioner, Central Province, *Christian Catholic Church in Zion*, CID 1/3/23, Lilongwe, 11.11.1924, NAM.

The Director of Medical Services, *Southern Rhodesia*, "Report on the Public Health for 1930," Salisbury, 1931.

Van Buren Shumaker, *Certificate for J. Wesley Dingiswayo*, Johannesburg: General Headquarters of the C.C.A.Church in Zion, 4.8.1924, NAM.

Books

Abraham, John C., *Report on Nyasaland Natives in the Union of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia*, London: Published for the Government of Nyasaland, 1937.

Abrahams, Roger D., ed., *African Folktales*, New York: Pantheon, 2000.

- Adeyemo, Tokunboh, *Salvation in African Tradition*, Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House, 1997.
- Albrecht, Daniel E., *Rites in the Spirit*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.
- Amanze, James N., *African Traditional Religion in Malawi: The Case of the Bimbi Cult*, Zomba: CLAIM, 2002.
- Ammerman, Nancy T., *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in a Modern World*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987.
- Anderson, Allan, with Otwang, Samuel, *Tumelo. The Faith of African Pentecostals in South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA, 1993.
- _____, *Zion and Pentecost*, Pretoria: UNISA, 2000.
- _____, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, Cambridge: University Press, 2004.
- Anderson-Morehead, A.E.M., *The History of the Universities Mission to Central Africa*, vol.1, 1859-1909, London: UMCA.
- Arbman, Ernst, *Ecstasy or Religious Trance*, Uppsala: Svenska Bokförlaget, 1970.
- Baëta, Christian G., *Prophetism in Ghana: A Study of Some Spiritual Churches*, London: SCM Press, 1962.
- _____, ed., *Christianity in Tropical Africa*, London: Oxford University Press, 1968.
- Barnes, John A., *The Fort Jameson Ngoni*, n.d.
- Barth, Karl, *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik*, Zürich: EVZ Verlag, 1967.
- Bastide, Roger; Sebba, Helen, *The African Religions of Brazil*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2007.
- Baur, John, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, Nairobi: Daughters of St. Paul, 1998.
- Becken, Hans-Jürgen, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972.
- Beckmann, David M., *Eden Revival: Spiritual Churches in Ghana*, St. Louis: Concordia, 1975.

- Bellah, Robert N., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.
- Berger, Peter L., *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, Garden City: Doubleday, 1967.
- _____, *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Berglund, Axel-Ivar, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.
- Bergson, Henri, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, New York: Henry Holt, 1935.
- Buku Lopatulika ndilo Mau a Mulungu*, The Bible in Nyanja, Union Version, First edition in 1922.
- Boeder, Robert B., *Malawians Abroad. The History of Labour Emigration from Malawi to its Neighbors, 1890 to the Present*, PhD, Michigan State University, 1974.
- Boer, Harry R., *Pentecost and Missions*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961.
- Bone, David S., ed., *Malawi's Muslims. Historical Perspectives*, Zomba: Kachere, 2000.
- Bosch, David J., *Transforming Mission*, New York: Maryknoll, 1992.
- Bourdillion, Michael, *Religion and Society. A Text for Africa*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1990.
- Burger, Isak and Nel, Marius, *The Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, 1908-2008*, Centurion: Apostolic Faith Mission, 2008.
- Burgess, Stanley M., ed., *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.
- Busch, Eberhard, Karl Barth. *His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.
- Cannell, Fenella, *The Anthropology of Christianity*, Durham: Duke University, 2007.

- Casanova, José, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Chakanza, Joseph C., *Voices of Preachers in Protest*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1998.
- _____, ed., *Research in African Traditional Religion: Initiation Rites for Boys in Lomwe Society and other Essays*, Zomba: Kachere Series, 2004.
- _____, *Wisdom of the People: 2000 Chinyanja Proverbs*, Zomba: Kachere, 2001.
- Chidester, David, *Religions of South Africa*, London: Routledge, 1992.
- Chikometsa, Nelson J.A., *Death Rites in African Instituted Churches: The Watchman Healing Mission and the Restoration Church*, Zomba: Kachere, Kachere Documents no. 42, 2006.
- Cohen, Louis; Manion, Lawrence; Morrison, Keith, *Research Methods in Education*, London: Routledge, 2003.
- Cole-King, P.A., *Lake Malawi Steamers*, Limbe: Montfort Press, 1987.
- Comaroff, Jean, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.
- Commission for Technical Cooperation in Africa South of the Sahara, *Migrant Workers in Africa South of the Sahara*, Abidjan: Sixth Intern African Labour Conference, 1961, NAM.
- Copeland, Gloria, ed., *John G. Lake*, Fort Worth: Kenneth Copeland Publications, 1995.
- Corton, Andre; Marshall-Fratani, Ruth, eds., *Between Babel and Pentecost*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.
- Cox, Harvey, *Fire from Heaven*, Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1995.
- Daneel, Marthinus L., *Zionism and Faith Healing in Rhodesia*, Leiden: Afrika Studiecentrum, 1970.
- _____, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol. 2, The Hague: Mouton, 1974.
- _____, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol. 3 Leadership and Fission Dynamics, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1988.

- Dayton, Donald W., *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000.
- Diamond, Jared, *The World until Yesterday*, London: Penguin, 2012.
- Dillon-Malone, Clive M., *The Korsten Basketmakers. A Study of the Masowe Apostles an Indigenous African Religious Movement*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978.
- Dixon, Patrick, *Signs of Revival*, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1994.
- Douglas, Mary, *Purity and Danger*, London: Routledge, 2002.
- _____, *Natural Symbols*, London: Routledge, 2003.
- Dubb, A.A., *Community of the Saved. An African Revivalist Church in the East Cape*, Witwatersrand University Press, African Studies Institute, 1976.
- Du Bois, William E.B., *The Souls of Black Folk*, Chicago, 1903 and New York: Fawcett Publications, 1968.
- Du Plessis, Johannes, *A Thousand Miles into Africa*, Cape Town: Oliphant, 1905.
- _____, *The Life of Andrew Murray of South Africa*, London: Marshall, 1920.
- Durkheim, Emile, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1964.
- Eggers, Dave, *What is the What*, New York: Vintage Books, 2007.
- Eisenlöffel, Ludwig, *Bis alle eins werden, Siebzig Jahre Berliner Erklärung und ihre Folgen*, Erzhausen: Leuchter, 1979.
- Eliade, Mircea, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, London: Steed and Ward, 1958.
- _____, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, Princeton University, 1964.
- Eller, Jack D., *Introducing Anthropology of Religion*, New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Elmslie, Walter A., *Among the Wild Ngoni*, London: Frank Cass, 1970.
- Engelke, Matthew, *A Problem of Presence. Beyond Scripture in an African Church*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
- Epstein, Isidore, *Judaism*, London: Penguin, 1959.

- Erikson, Thomas H., *Small Places, Large Issues*, London: Pluto Press, 2001.
- Evans-Pritchard, Edward E., *The Nuer*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1940.
- Everett, Susanne, *History of Slavery*, Leicester: Magna Books, 1978.
- Faupel, David W., *Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought*, Sheffield: Academic Press, 1996.
- Feierman, Steven; Janzen, John M., eds., *The Social Basis of Health and Healing in Africa*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- Fenn, Richard K., ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology of Religion*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003.
- Feuerbach, Ludwig, *The Essence of Christianity*, New York: Harper, 1957.
- Fiedler, Klaus, *The Story of Faith Missions*, Oxford: Regnum, 1994.
- Finney, Charles G., *Lectures on Revival*, Grand Rapids: Bethany House Publishers, 1989.
- Firth, Raymond, *Tikopia Ritual and Belief*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1967.
- Flint, Karen E., *Healing Traditions: African Medicine, Cultural Exchange, & Competition in South Africa, 1820-1948*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009.
- Ford, John, *The Role of Trypanosomiases in African Ecology: A Study of the Tsetse-fly Problem*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1971.
- Forster, Peter G., *T. Cullen Young: Missionary and Anthropologist*, Zomba: Kachere, 2003.
- Frazier, E. Franklin, *The Negro Church in America*, New York: Schocken Books, 1964.
- Fraser, Donald, *Winning a Primitive People*, London: Seeley, Service and Co., 1914.
- Friedson, Steven M., *Dancing Prophets*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Furseth, Inger, Repstad, Pål, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.

- Gardiner, Gordon P., *Out of Zion into all the World*, Shippensburg, PA: Companion Press, 1990.
- _____, *Radiant Glory. The Life of Martha Wing Robinson*, n.d., Bread of Life, 1982.
- Gehman, Richard J., *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective*, Nairobi: East African Publishers, 1993.
- Geldenhuys, Norval, *The Gospel of Luke*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951.
- Gladwell, Malcolm, *The Tipping Point*, New York: Back Bay Books, 2000.
- _____, *Outliers: The Story of Success*, New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2008.
- Gluckman, Max, *Custom and Conflict in Africa*, New York: Barnes and Noble, 1955.
- Good, Charles M. Jr., *The Steamer Parish: The Rise and Fall of Missionary Medicine on an African Frontier*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Goff, James R., *Fields White unto Harvest*, University of Arkansas, 1998.
- Gray, Robert, *Black Christians and White Missionaries*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.
- Greeley, Andrew M., *The Sociology of the Paranormal*, London: Sage, 1975.
- Greschat, Hans – Jürgen, *The Watchtower Movement in Central Africa*, Marburg: Elwert, 1967.
- Haliburton, Gordon M., *The Prophet Harris: A Study of an African Prophet and His Mass Movement in the Ivory Coast and the Gold Coast, 1913-1915*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- Hardy, Thomas, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, London: Penguin, 2003.
- Harris, Joseph E., ed., *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, Washington: Howard University Press, 1982.
- Hastings, Adrian, *African Christianity*, London: Seabury Press, 1976.
- _____, *The Church in Africa 1450-1950*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.

- Hefner, Robert W., *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation*, Berkeley: University of California, 1993.
- Herskovitz, Melville, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1958.
- Hollenweger, Walter J., *Enthusiastisches Christentum. Die Pfingstbewegung in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Wuppertal: Theologischer Verlag Rolf Brockhaus, 1969.
- _____, *Pentecostalism. Origins and Developments Worldwide*, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997.
- Houseknecht, Sharon K.; Pankhurst, Jerry G., eds., *Family, Religion and Social Change in Diverse Societies*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Isichei, Elizabeth, *A History of Christianity in Africa*, London: SPCK, 1995.
- Jacobsen, Douglas, *Thinking in the Spirit*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003.
- Janzen, John M., *Lemba 1650-1930: A Drum of Affliction in Africa and the New World*, New York: Garland, 1982.
- Jeremias, Joachim, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975.
- Joyce, James, *Ulysses*, London: Picador, 1998.
- Kajamu, Rodrick, *History of Thamanda Seventh-Day Church*, Zomba: Kachere, Kachere Documents no. 21, 2006.
- Kalilombe, Patrick A., *Doing Theology at the Grassroots*, Zomba: Kachere, 1999.
- Keller, Eva, *The Road to Clarity: Seventh-day Adventism in Madagascar*, New York: Palgrave, 2005.
- Kelsey, Morton, *Healing and Christianity*, New York: Harper and Row, 1973.
- Kiernan, James P., *The Production and Management of Therapeutic Power in Zionist Churches within a Zulu City*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990.
- Kraft, Charles H., *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2010.

- Kriesberg, Louis. ed., *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, Greenwich: JAI Press, 1990.
- Kubik, Gerhard, *Malawian Music. A Framework for Analysis*, Zomba: Centre for Social Research, University of Malawi, 1987.
- Kuper, Hilda, *An African Aristocracy*, London: Oxford University Press, 1947.
- Langworthy, Harry, "Africa for the African." *The Life of Joseph Booth*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996.
- Larden, Robert A., *Our Apostolic Heritage, The Apostolic Church of Canada*, Friesen Printers, 1971.
- Larsen, Egon, *Strange Cults and Sects: A Study of their Origin and Influence*, New York: Hart Publishing Company, 1971, n. d.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude, *Structural Anthropology*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973.
- _____, *The Naked Man*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1981.
- Lewis, Ioan M., *Ecstatic Religion*, London: Penguin Books, nd.
- Lewis, Ioan M., ed., *Islam in Tropical Africa*, London: Oxford University Press, 1966.
- Lindner, William, *Andrew Murray*, Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1996.
- Lindsay, Gordon, *John Alexander Dowie. A Life Story of Trials, Tragedies and Triumphs*, Dallas, 1980.
- Lomax, Alan, *Cantometrics: An Approach to the Anthropology of Music*, Bekeley: University of California, 1976.
- MacNutt, Francis, *Healing*, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1983.
- MacRobert, Iain, *The Black Roots and White Racism of Early Pentecostalism in the USA*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988.
- Makondesa, Patrick, *The Church History of Providence Industrial Mission*, Zomba: Kachere, 2006.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw, *Magic, Science and Religion*, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984.
- _____, *Sex and Repression in Savage Society*, Oxon: Routledge, 2007.

- Manda, Mtafu A.Z., *The State and the Labour Movement in Malawi*, Glasgow: Dudu Nsomba Publications, 2000.
- Martin, David, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002.
- Marty, Martin, *Pilgrims in their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America*, New York: Penguin, 1984.
- Mbiti, John S., *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed., Oxford: Heinemann, 1999.
- McCracken, John, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2000.
- McGuire, Meredith B., *Ritual Healing in Suburban America*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991.
- McIntosh, Hamish, *Robert Laws: Servant of Africa*, London: Continuum, 1993.
- Mead, George Herbert, *Mind, Self & Society*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.
- Mead, Margaret, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, New York: Morrow, 1928.
- Morris, Brian, *Anthropological Studies of Religion*, Cambridge: University Press, 1987.
- _____, *Animals and Ancestors. An Ethnography*, Oxford: Berg, 2000.
- Morris, Donald R., *The Washing of the Spears. The Rise and Fall of the Zulu Nation*, London: Pimlico, 1994.
- M'Passou, Denis, *History of African Independent Churches in Southern Africa 1892-1992*, Mulanje: Spot Publications, 1994.
- Mullings, Leith, *Therapy, Ideology and Social Change: Mental Healing in Urban Ghana*, Berkeley, 1984.
- Murray, Andrew, *The Full Blessing of Pentecost*, London: James Nisbeth, 1908.
- Mvula, Gregory C.; Lwesya, Enson M., *Flames of Fire*, Blantyre: Assemblies of God Literature Center, 2005.
- Mwasi, Yesaya Z., *Essential and Paramount Reasons for Working Independently*, Zomba: Kachere, 1999.

- Nancy-Harper, Spiwe, *Trials and Tribulations*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 2000.
- Naudé, Piet, *The Zionist Christian Church in South Africa, A Case Study in Oral Theology*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995.
- Ncozana, Silas S., *The Spirit Dimension in African Christianity*, Blantyre: CLAIM - Kachere, 2002.
- Ngubane, H., *Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine*, London: Academic Press, 1977.
- Oesterreich, Traugott K., *Possession, Demonical and Other, among Primitive Races in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Modern Times*, Cedar Knolls: Wehman Brothers, 1974.
- Okorochoa, Cyril C., *The Meaning of Religious Conversion in Africa*, Aldershot: Avebury, 1987.
- Ong, Walter J., *Orality and Literacy. The Technologizing of the Word*, London: Methuen, 1982.
- Oosthuizen, Gerhardus, *Post-Christianity in Africa*, London: C. Hurst, 1968.
- _____, *The Healer-Prophet in Afro-Christian Churches*, Leiden: Brill, 1992.
- Ott, Martin, *African Theology in Images*, Blantyre: CLAIM - Kachere, 2000.
- Pachai, Bridglal, *Malawi. The History of the Nation*, London: Longman, 1973.
- _____, ed., *The Early History of Malawi*, London: Longman, 1975.
- Pauw, Berthold A., *Religion in a Tswana Chieftdom*. London: Oxford University Press, 1960.
- Phiri, Desmond D., *From Nguni to Ngoni*, Limbe: Popular Publications, 1982.
- _____, *History of Malawi. From Earliest Times to the Year 1915*, Blantyre: CLAIM, 2004.
- Phiri, Isabel A., *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*, Blantyre: CLAIM - Kachere, 1997.
- Ranger, Terence O., *State and Church in Southern Rhodesia, 1919-1939*, Harare: Historical Association of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, n.d.
- _____, *Dance and Society in Eastern Africa, 1890-1970*, London: Heinemann, 1975

Read, Margaret, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956.

____, *Children of their Fathers*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968.

Raboteau, Albert J., *Slave Religion*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.

Reijnaerts, Hubert; Nielsen, Ann; Schoffeleers, Matthew, *Montfortians in Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM - Kachere, 1997.

Reinhertz, Shakina, *Women Called to the Path of Rumi: The Way of the Whirling Dervish*, Prescott: Hohm Press, 2001.

Retief, M.W., *William Murray of Nyasaland*, Alice: Lovedale Press, 1958.

Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, London and Dar-es-Salaam: Bogle- L'Ouverture and Tanzania Publishing House, 1972.

Ross, Andrew C., *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM, 1997.

____, *Colonialism to Cabinet Crisis*, Zomba: Kachere, 2009.

Ross, Kenneth R., ed., *Christianity in Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM - Kachere, 1996.

____, ed., *Gospel Ferment in Malawi: Theological Essays*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1995.

____, ed., *God, People and Power in Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM - Kachere, 1996.

Rouget, Gilbert, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession*, London: University of Chicago Press, 1985.

Royce, Anya P. *The Anthropology of Dance*, Alton: Dance Books, 2002.

Sachs, Curt, *World History of the Dance*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1938.

Sacks, Oliver, *Der Mann, der seine Frau mit einem Hut verwechselte*, Hamburg: Spiegel Verlag, 2007.

____, *Musicophilia*, London: Picador, 2007.

Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery*, London: Catholic Truth Society, 1967.

Safranski, Rüdiger, *Nietzsche: Biographie seines Denkens*, Hamburg: Spiegel Verlag, 2007.

- Sanders, Cheryl J., *Saints in Exile*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Sangster, William E., *The Craft of Sermon Construction*, London: Marshall Pickering, 1989.
- Schoffeleers, Matthew, *Pentecostalism and Neo-Traditionalism: The Religious Polarization of a Rural District in Southern Malawi*, Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1985.
- _____, *River of Blood*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992.
- _____, *Guardians of the Land*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1999.
- _____, *Religion and the Dramatization of Life*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2002.
- _____, *Mang'anja Traditional Religion*, Zomba: Kachere, 2008.
- Schreiter, Robert J., *Constructing Local Theologies*, London: SCM, 1985.
- _____, ed., *Faces of Jesus in Africa*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991.
- Sen, Amartya, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay of Entitlement and Deprivation*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981.
- Shepperson, George; Price, Thomas, *Independent African*, Edinburgh: University Press, 1987.
- Shorter, Aylward, *Prayer in the Religious Traditions of Africa*, Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1975.
- Smelser, Neil J., ed., *Sociology: An Introduction*, New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1967.
- Soko, Boston, Nchimi Chikanga. *The Battle against Witchcraft in Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2002.
- Strohbehn, Ulf, *Physical Healing and Exorcism in Malawian Pentecostal Churches*, Zomba: University of Malawi, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, 2000.
- _____, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, Blantyre: International Bible College Berea, 2000.
- _____, *Pentecostalism in Malawi, A History of the Apostolic Faith Mission*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005.

- ____, *Spiritual Parenthood*, Blantyre: International Bible College Berea, 2006,
- Sundkler, Bengt, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, London: OUP, 1948.
- ____, *The Christian Ministry in Africa*, London: SCM Press, 1960.
- ____, *Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists*, London: OUP, 1976.
- Sundkler, Bengt; Steed, Christopher, *A History of the Church in Africa*, Cambridge: University Press, 2000.
- Taylor, John V., *The Primal Vision*, London: SCM Press, 1963.
- Tembo, Masiye, *Touched by His Grace. A Ngoni Story of Tragedy and Triumph*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005.
- Tengatenga, James, *Church, State and Society in Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere, 2006.
- Tew, Mary, *Peoples of the Lake Nyasa Region*, London: Oxford University Press, 1950.
- Thomas, Linda E., *Under the Canopy. Ritual Process and Spiritual Resilience in South Africa*, Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1999.
- Thompson, Jack T., *Touching the Heart. Xhosa Missionaries to Malawi, 1876-1888*, Pretoria: UNISA, 2000.
- Tindall, P.E.N., *History of Central Africa*, London: Longman, 1997.
- Tuchmann, Barbara, *Der ferne Spiegel*, Hamburg: Spiegel Verlag, 2007,
- Turner, Harold W., *African Independent Church, II, The Life and Faith of the Church of the Lord*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1967.
- Turner, Victor, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967.
- UNDP, Mozambique. *National Human Development Report 1999*, Maputo, 2000.
- van Breugel, Johan W.M., *Chewa Traditional Religion*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2001.
- van Koevering, Helen E.P., *Dancing their Dreams. The Lakeshore Nyanja Women of the Anglican Diocese of Niasa*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005.

- van Onselen, Charles, *Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia 1900 – 1933*, London: Pluto Press, 1951.
- Van Velsen, J., *The Politics of Kinship: A Study in the Social Manipulation among the Lakeside Tonga*, Manchester: University Press, 1964.
- Vaughan, Megan, *Curing their Ills. Colonial Power and African Illness*, Stanford: University Press, 1991.
- Venter, Dawid, ed., *Engaging Modernity. Methods and Cases for Studying African Independent Churches in South Africa*, Westport: Praeger, 2004.
- Vilakazi, Absalom, Shembe, *The Revitalization of African Society*, Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1986.
- Wacker, Grant, *Heaven Below*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Wagner, C. Peter, *Lektionen aus der Weltweiten Erweckung* (engl. *Spiritual Power and Church Growth*), Mainz-Kastel: Projektion J, 1986.
- Walls, Andrew F., *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000.
- Walsh, Thomas G., Kaufmann, Frank, eds., *Religion and Social Transformation in Southern Africa*, St. Paul: Paragon House, 1999.
- Weber, Max, *The Sociology of Religion*, London: Methuen, 1965.
- _____, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie I*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1988.
- Wendland, Ernst R., *Buku Loyera. An Introduction to the New Chichewa Bible Translation*, Blantyre: CLAIM - Kachere, 1998.
- _____, with Salimo Hachibamba, *Galu Wamkota: Missiological Reflections from South-Central Africa*, Zomba: Kachere, 2007.
- _____, *Preaching that Grabs the Heart: A Rhetoric-stylistic Study of the Chichewa Revival Sermons of Shadrack Wame*, Blantyre: CLAIM - Kachere, 2000.
- West, Harry G.; Luedke, Tracy J., eds., *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.

- West, Martin E., *Bishops and Prophets in a Black City: African Independent Churches in Soweto Johannesburg*, Cape Town: David Philip, 1975.
- Whisson, Michael G.; West, Martin eds., *Religion and Social Change in Southern Africa, 1975-2000*, Cape Town: David Philip, 1975.
- White, Landeg, *Magomero. Portrait of an African Village*, Cambridge: University Press, 1987.
- White, Seodi Venekai-Rudo; nya Kaunda Kamanga, Dorothy; Kachika, Tinyade; Chiweza, Asiyati Lorraine; Gomilie-Chidyaonga, Flossie, *Dispossessing the Widow. Gender Based Violence in Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM - Kachere, 2002.
- Willoughby, William C., *The Soul of the Bantu*, Westport: Negro Universities Press, 1970.
- Wilson, George H., *The History of the Universities Mission to Central Africa*, London: UMCA, 1936.
- Young, Cullen T., *Notes on the Customs and Folk-Lore of the Tumbuka-Kamanga Peoples*, London: Frank Cass, 1970.
- Zimmerling, Peter, *Die Charismatischen Bewegungen*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2002.
- Zuesse, Evans M., *Ritual Cosmos. The Sanctification of Life in African Religions*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985.

Dissertations and Thesis

- Banda, Lucy S., *The Masowe and Maranke Apostles in Malawi: Dynamics of the Entry, Growth, Development and Impact, 1950-2002*, MA, Zomba: Chancellor College, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, 2003.
- Banda, Macleard S., *Mission by All to All: A Study of the History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Lunjika Mission 1932 – 1995*, MA, Zomba: Chancellor College, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, 2006.
- Boeder, Robert B., *Malawians Abroad. The History of Labour Emigration from Malawi to its Neighbors, 1890 to the Present*, PhD, Michigan State University, 1974.

- Burger, Isak M., *A Perspective on the History of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa*, PhD, Johannesburg: AFM Theological Seminary, 1999.
- Chirwa, Wiseman, *Theba is Power. Rural Labour, Migrancy and Fishing in Malawi, 1890s-1985*, PhD, Kingston, Ontario: Queen's University, 1992.
- Fogelqvist, Anders, *The Red Dressed Zionists: Symbols of Power in a Swazi Independent Church*, PhD, Uppsala Research Reports in Cultural Anthropology, 1986.
- Garner, Robert C., *Religion and Economics in a South African Township*, PhD, University of Cambridge, 1998.
- Jere, Janet Wezzie, *African Instituted Churches and Schooling: The Masowe Apostles at Mpondabwino, Zomba*, BTh, Zomba: Chancellor College, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, 2002.
- Kapito, MacDuff, *The Impact of Yao Traditional Initiation Teachings on Women. A Case Study of T/A Malemia in Zomba District*. BA (Theology and Religious Studies), Mzuzu University, 2010.
- Kayambazinthu, Edrinnie, *Patterns of Language Use in Malawi*, PhD, La Trobe University, 1994.
- Kruger, A., *Die Zion Christian Church – 'n religieuse Bantoebeweging in 'n tyd vanontwrigting?* MTh, Potchefstroom, 1971.
- Kruss, Glenda, *Religion, Class and Culture: Indigenous Churches in South Africa, with Special Reference to Zionist-Apostolics*, MA, University of Cape Town, 1985.
- Longwe, Hany, *Identity by Dissociation: The First Group to Secede from Chilembwe's Church: A History of Peter Kalemba and the Achewa Providence Industrial Mission*, MA, Zomba: University of Malawi, 2000.
- Lukhaimane, E.K., *The Zion Christian Church of Ignatius Engenas Lekganyane, 1924 to 1948. An African Experiment with Christianity*, MA, Pietersburg: University of the North, 1980.
- Mohr, Matthias, *Negotiating the Boundary: The Response of KwaMashu Zionists to a Volatile Political Climate*, PhD, Durban: University of Natal, 1993.

Ncozana, Silas S., *Spirit Possession and Tumbuka Christians, 1875-1950*, PhD, Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen, 1985.

Pauw, Christoff M., *Mission and Church in Malawi. The History of the Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian 1889-1962*, PhD, University of Stellenbosch, 1980.

Phiri, Makhaza S.S., *Puberty Rites for Girls in Mlefu-Mbemba Village in Traditional Authority Mzukuzuku at Embangweni in South Mzimba*, BEd, Zomba: Chancellor College, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, 2001.

Sardella, Michelle P., *Lomwe Anthropology: Religious Tradition and Culture of the Alomwe of Phalombe District in Malawi*, Licentiate, Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 2003.

Articles and Journals

Anderson, Allan, "The Lekganyanes and Prophecy in the Zion Christian Church", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Leiden: Brill, 1999, vol. 29, pp. 285-312.

Aquina, Mary, "Christianity in a Rhodesian Trust Land", *African Social Research*, n.d., vol. 1, June 1966.

Barratt, David B., Johnson, Todd, "Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 1998", *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, n.d., Grass Roots Publishing, 1998, Vol. 22/1, pp. 26ff.

Bastian, Jean-Pierre, "Pentecostalism, Market Logic and Religious Transnationalisation in Costa Rica", in: André Corton, Ruth Marshall-Fratani, eds, *Between Babel and Pentecost*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001, pp. 170ff.

Becken, Hans-Jürgen, "Healing in the African Independent Churches", *Credo*, vol. 18, pp. 14-21, 1971.

Beidelmann, Thomas O., "Swazi Royal Ritual", *Africa*, n.d., vol. 36, 1966, pp. 373-405.

- Bixler, Frances, "Dancing in the Spirit", in: Stanley M. Burgess, Eduard van der Mass, eds., *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002, pp. 570f.
- Blumhofer, Edith L., "Dowie, John Alexander", Stanley M. Burgess, Gary B. McGee, eds., *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, pp. 248f.
- _____, "Life on Faith Lines: Faith Homes and Early Pentecostal Values", *Assemblies of God Heritage*, n.d., Summer 1990, pp. 10-22.
- Bodenstein, n.d., "African Medicine", p. 52, in: Hans-Jürgen Becken, *Theologie der Heilung*, Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionsbuchhandlung, 1972, p. 128.
- Bonongwe, Francis J.M., "Initiation Rites for Boys in Lomwe Society: A Dying Cultural Practice?", in: Joseph C. Chakanza, ed., *Research in African Traditional Religion: Initiation Rites for Boys in Lomwe Society and other Essays*, Zomba: Kachere Series, 2004, pp. 5-22.
- Boone, Jerome R., "Community and Worship: The Key Components of Pentecostal Christian Formation", *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, Leiden: Brill, Vol. 8, 4/1996, pp. 129-142.
- Byrd, Joseph, "Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutical Theory and Pentecostal Proclamation", in: *Pneuma*, Cleveland: Society for Pentecostal Studies, vol. 15, 1993, pp. 203-214.
- Chakanza, Joseph C., "Provisional Annotated Chronological List of Witch-Finding Movements in Malawi, 1850-1980", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Leiden: Brill, vol. 15, 1985, pp. 227-243.
- Cummergen, Paul, "Zionism and Politics in Swaziland", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Leiden: Brill, 2000, vol. 30, no. 3, p. 370-385.
- DeGabriele, Joseph, "When Pills don't Work - African Illnesses, Misfortune and *Mdulo*", in: Joseph C. Chakanza, ed., *Religion in Malawi*, no. 9, 1999, pp. 9-23.
- Dein, S., Barlow, H., "Why do People Join the Hare Krishna Movement? Deprivation Theory Revisited", London: n.d., *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, vol. 2, 1, 1999, pp. 75-84.

- Eggenberger, Oswald, "Dowie, John Alexander", Kurt Galling, ed., *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, vol. 2, 1986, p. 258.
- Feierman, Steven "Ethnographic Regions – Healing, Power and History", in: Harry G. West, Tracy J. Luedke, eds., *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, pp. 187ff.
- Fiedler, Klaus, "Power at the Receiving End: The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in One Party Malawi", in: Kenneth R. Ross, ed., *God, People and Power in Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM - Kachere, 1996, pp. 149-176.
- Harris, Olivia, "Christianity in Highland Bolivia" in: Fenella Cannell, ed., *The Anthropology of Christianity*, Durham: Duke University, 2007, pp. 51-76.
- Hexham, Irving; Poewe-Hexham, Karla, "South Africa", in: Stanley M. Burgess, ed., *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003, p. 228.
- Hokkanen, Markku, "Scottish Missionaries and African Healers: Perceptions and Relations in the Livingstonia Mission, 1875-1930", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 34, no. 3, Leiden: Brill, 2004, pp. 320-347.
- Hollenweger, Walter J., "Dancing Documentaries: The Theological and Political Significance of Pentecostal Dancing", in: J. G. Davis, ed., *Worship and Dance*, Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1975, pp. 76-82.
- Hörschele, Stefan, "On Sabbath Keeping and Sabbath Theology among Younger African Churches", *Spes Christiana*, Friedensau: Theologische Hochschule, vols. 18, 19, 2007-2008, pp. 39-52.
- Hurbon, Laënnec, "Pentecostalism and Transnationalism in the Caribbean", in: André Corton, Ruth Marshall-Fratani, eds, *Between Babel and Pentecost*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001, pp. 128ff.
- Janzen, John M., "The Tradition of Renewal in Kongo Religion", in: Newell S. Booth, ed., *African Religions: A Symposium*, New York: Nok Publishers, 1977, pp. 69-115.
- Kraft, Charles, *Christian Life Magazin*, Wheaton, n.d., vol. 10, 1982.

- Kwark, Lawrencia, "The Reinvention of Tradition in African Independent Churches as a Means to Engage Modernity", in: Dawid Venter, ed., *Engaging Modernity*, Westport: Praeger, 2004, pp. 136ff.
- Lambo, Adeoye T., "The Concept and Practice of Mental Health in African Cultures", *East African Medical Journal*, nd., vol. 37, 1960, pp. 464-471.
- Lee, S.G., "Spirit Possession among the Zulu", in: John Beattie, John Middleton, eds., *Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa*, New York: African Publishing, 1969.
- Leslie, M.E., "Ntcheu in the 1890s'", *The Society of Malawi Journal*, Blantyre, Vol. XXIV, no. 1, 1971, pp. 66ff.
- Levine, L.W., "African Culture and U.S. Slavery", in: Harris, Joseph D., ed., *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, Washington: Howard University, 1982, pp. 131ff.
- Linden, Ian, "The Maseko Ngoni at Domwe: 1870-1900", in: Bridglal Pachai, ed., *The Early History of Malawi*, London: Longman, 1975, pp. 243ff.
- Linton, Ralph, "Nativistic Movements", *American Anthropologist*, Arlington: American Anthropological Association, no. 45, pp. 230-240, 1943.
- Luedke, Tracy J., "Presidents, Bishops and Mothers", in: Harry G. West, Tracy J. Luedke, eds., *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.
- Luckmann, Thomas, "Moralizing Sermons, Then and Now," in: *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology of Religion*, ed. Richard K. Fenn, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003.
- Lwanda, John, "Scotland, Malawi and Medicine: Livingstone's Legacy, I presume? An Historical Perspective", Robert Carachi, ed., *Scottish Medical Journal*, Glasgow: Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, vol. 52, no. 3, 2007, pp. 35 -43.
- Marks, Shula; Andersson, Neil, "Industrialization, Rural Health, and the 1944 National Health Services Commission in South Africa", in: Steven

- Feierman, John M. Janzen, eds., *The Social Basis of Health & Healing in Africa*, Berkely: University of California, 1992.
- Marshall, Lorna, “!Kung Bushmen Religious Beliefs”, *Africa*, vol. 32.3, pp. 221-252, 1962.
- Maxwell, David “Christianity without Frontiers: Shona Missionaries and Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa”, in: David Maxwell, Ingrid Lawrie, eds., *Christianity and the African Imagination, Essays in Honour of Adrian Hastings*, Leiden: Brill, 2002, pp. 295-332.
- Meyer, Birgit, “Make a Complete Break with the Past. Memory and Post-Colonial Modernity in Ghanaian Discourse”, in: Adrian Hastings, ed., *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Leiden: Brill, vol. 28, no. 3, pp. 316-349, 1998.
- Mijoga, Hilary B.P., “African Instituted Churches as Vanguard of African Culture: A Reassessment”, *Missionalia*, Menlo Park: Southern African Missiological Society, vol. 30, no. 2, 2002.
- Mills, Robert A., “Musical Prayers: Reflections on the African Roots of Pentecostal Music”, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, Leiden: Brill, vol. 6, no. 12, 1998, pp. 109-126.
- Morris, Brian, “Book Review: Heidegger Among the Tumbuka: Steven M. Friedson, Dancing Prophets: Musical Experience in Tumbuka Healing”, Joseph C. Chakanza, ed., *Religion in Malawi*, Zomba: Chancellor College, no. 11, 2004, pp. 37 – 44.
- Mphande, David, *Tonga Proverbs for Teaching and Preaching*, Zomba: Kachere, 2006.
- Mulwafu, Wapulumuka O., “The Interface of Christianity and Conservation in Colonial Malawi, c. 1850-1930”, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, David Maxwell, ed., Leiden: Brill, 2004, vol. 34, pp. 297-317.
- Norbeck, Edward, “African Rituals of Conflict”, *American Anthropology*, n.d., vol. 65, 1903, pp. 1254-79.
- Omenyo, Cephas N., “Essential Aspects of African Ecclesiology: The Case of the African Independent Churches”, *Pneuma*, Cleveland: Society for Pentecostal Studies, vol. 22, no. 2, 2000, pp. 242ff.

- Packard, Randall M., "Industrialization, Rural Poverty, and Tuberculosis in South Africa, 1850 – 1950", in: Steven Feierman, John M. Janzen, eds., *The Social Basis of Health & Healing in Africa*, Berkely: University of California, 1992.
- Parham, Charles, ed., *Apostolic Faith*, Kansas, nd, October 1912.
- Patterson, K. D.; Pyle, G. F., "The Diffusion of Influenza in Sub-Saharan Africa during the 1918 – 1919 Pandemic", *Social Science and Medicine*, n.d. vol. 17, 1983, pp. 1299-1307.
- Pénoukou, Efoé J., "Christology in the Village," in: Robert J. Schreiter, ed., *Faces of Jesus in Africa*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991.
- Pfeiffer, James, "Money, Modernity and Morality: Traditional Healing and the Expansion of the Holy Spirit in Mozambique", in: Harry G. West, Tracy J. Luedke, eds., *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, pp. 85ff.
- Phiri, Kings M., "Some Changes in the Matrilineal Family System among the Chewa of Malawi since the Nineteenth Century," *The Journal of African History*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, vol. 24, pp. 257-274.
- Pretorius, J. Lou (Snr.), "An Introduction to the History of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission in Malawi 1889 – 1914", in: Bridglal Pachai, ed., *The Early History of Malawi*, London: Longman, 1975, pp. 365 – 383.
- Richards, Audrey I., "A Modern Movement of Witch-Finders", *Africa*, n.d., vol. 8/4, 1935, pp. 458ff.
- Schmidt, V., "Musik", in: H. Burkhardt, F. Grünzweig, F. Laubach, G. Maier, eds., *Das Grosse Bibellexikon*, Wuppertal: Brockhaus, vol. 2, 1990, p. 998.
- Schoffeleers, Matthew, "The History and Political Role of the M'Bona Cult among the Mang'anja", in: Terence O. Ranger, I. N. Kimambo, eds., *The Historical Study of African Religions*, London: Heinemann, 1972, pp. 73-94.
- _____, "Ritual Healing and Political Acquiescence: The Case of the Zionist Churches of Southern Africa", n.d., *Africa* 60, no. 1, 1991, 1-25.
- Seibert, Gerhard, "But the Manifestation", in: E. Morier-Genoud, D. Péclard, eds., *Le Fait Missionnaire*, Lausanne: UNIL, vol. 17, 2005, pp. 143ff.

- Shepperson, George, "Ethiopiamism: Past and Present", in C. G. Baëta, ed., *Christianity in Tropical Africa*, Oxford: International African Institute / Oxford University Press, 1968, pp. 250ff.
- Shorter, Aylward, *Prayer in the Religious Traditions of Africa*, Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1975, pp. 8-13; in: Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000, pp. 122f.
- Snyder, A., in: T. Comstock, ed., *New Dimensions in Dance Research: Anthropology and Dance*, New York: Committee on Research in Dance, 1974, pp. 213f.
- Stacey, V., "Thomas Valpy French, 1825 - 1891, Intrepid Adventurer for Christ among Muslims", in: G. Anderson, ed., *Mission Legacies, Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994, p. 280ff.
- Strassmann, Beverly I., "The Function of Menstrual Taboos among the Dogon", *Human Nature*, New York: Springer, vol. 3, no. 2, 1992, pp. 89-131.
- Strohbehn, Ulf, "Pentecostalic Approaches and Manifestations in Early Malawian Church History", Postgraduate Colloquium, University of Malawi, Department of TRS, 1999.
- Turner, Harold W., "A Typology for African Religious Movements", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Andrew F. Walls, ed., Leiden: Brill, 1967, vol. I, no. 1, pp. 1-34.
- _____, "Tribal Religious Movements, New," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1975.
- van den Walle, Etienne; van de Walle, Francine, *Postpartum Sexual Abstinence in Tropical Africa*, University of Pennsylvania, Population Studies Centre, 1989.
- van Dijk, Rijk, "Transnational Images of Pentecostal Healing: Comparative Examples from Malawi and Botswana", in: Harry G. West, Tracy J. Luedke, eds., *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, pp. 99ff.

- Vail, H.L., "Religion, Language and the Tribal Myth: The Tumbuka and Chewa of Malawi," in: Matthew Schoffeleers, ed., *Guardians of the Land*, Gweru: Mambo-Kachere, 1999, pp. 209ff.
- Vaughan, Megan, "Famine Analysis and Family Relations: Nyasaland in 1949", in: Steven Feierman, John M. Janzen, eds., *The Social Basis of Health and Healing in Africa*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, pp. 68ff.
- Voliva, Wilbur G., ed., "Autobiographical Sketch of Elder Van Buren Shumaker", *Leaves of Healing*, Zion, Illinois, vol. 54, no.6, p. 122, 26.4.1924.
- Wagner, Christian P., "A Church Growth Perspective on Pentecostal Missions," in: M. Dempster, B.D. Klaus, D. Petersen, eds., *Called and Empowered. Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective*, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991, pp. 277ff.
- Waite, Gloria, "Public Health in Precolonial East Central Africa", in: Steven Feierman, John M. Janzen, eds., *The Social Basis of Health & Healing in Africa*, Berkely: University of California, 1992.
- West, Harry G., "Working the Borders to Beneficial Effect", in: Harry G. West, Tracy J. Luedke, *Borders and Healers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, pp. 33ff.
- Wilson, Monica "The Wedding Cakes: a Study of Ritual Change," in: Fontaine, J. S., ed., *The Interpretation of Ritual*, London: Tavistock, 1972.
- Wright, Moody "Missionary Report," Johannesburg; *The Comforter*, AFM of SA, Aug./Sep. 1941.

Websites

- Allen, Sharon, *The New ROE: Return On Ethics*.<http://www.forbes.com/2009/07/21/business-culture-corporate-citizenship-leadership-ethics.html>. 18.2.2010
- Boddy-Evans, Alistair, <http://africanhistory.about.com>. 11.7.2008.
- <http://dictionary.reference.com/>. 18.2.2009.
- <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics>. 10.5.2010.

Crossman, Peter, http://www.aic_research@yahoogroups.com, communication on 3.3.2008.

Hayes, Steve *Sundkler Deconstructed*, <http://www.geocities.com/missionalia/bethesda.htm> 22.2.2004.

Lunn, Sir Arnold, <http://www.cybernation.com/victory/quotations/authors/quotes>. 19.12.2008.

Mutingwende, Caleb Z., The Church of God in Zimbabwe,

Young, Brigham, *Journal of Discourses*, 6:229, 7:289. <http://www.journalofdiscourses.org>. 7.1.2010.

www.aic_research@yahoogroups.com, 15.3.2006.

<http://www.ccczion.org/missions/missions.htm> 4.4.2008

<http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/wz/html>. 20.3.2008.

<http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/p/a/passment.htm>. 26.11.2008

<http://www.folklife.si.edu/resources/Festival1997/faith>. 11.11.2009.

http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede_dimensions.php. 22.5.2010.

<http://gmczion.org/page.aspx?id=9> 4.4.2008

http://www.james-joyce-music.com/cd_jewelcase2.html. 22.11.2007.

<http://www.pcusa.org/health/international/profiles/nkhoma.htm>. 14.4.2009.

<http://www.populstat.info/Africa/malawic.htm>. 8.4.2009.

<http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/pagerender.fcgi?artid=1081783&pageindex=1>. 14.4.2009.

<http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/warstat3.htm>. 8.4.2009.

<http://www.seekgod.ca/bantu.htm>, 26.12.2007.

<http://virus.stanford.edu/uda/>. 12.4.2009.

http://www.who.int/hac/crises/mwi/background/Malawi_June06.pdf. 13.2.2009.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zion_Christian_Church. 26.12.2007; 12.1.2008.

<http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Dance>, Gabrielle Roth, 19.12.2008.

<http://www.zema.org>, 5.4.2008.

Occasional Papers

Bonga, Michael M., "Local Administration in the Ntcheu District with Special Reference to the Ntcheu District Council," Zomba: Chancellor College, History Department, History Seminar Paper 1972 – 3.

Chakanza, Joseph C., *The Independent Alternative: A Historical Survey*, Zomba: Chancellor College, University of Malawi, 1981.

Chatepa, H.K., "The Containment Policy of the Zambezi Industrial Mission: The Denominational Balkanization of the Ntonda Lowlands", Zomba: Chancellor College, Department of TRS, 1980.

Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion, *Leaves of Healing*, Zion, Illinois, June 14, 1895.

Kankondo, R.F., "The Ngoni Migrations, Settlement and Political Organization", Zomba: Chancellor College, Department of History, 1969/70.

Liwewe, Olivia M., "The Maseko Ngoni from 1820 to 1896: A Re-Examination of the Evidence from the Rangeley Papers in the Light of some Secondary Sources", Zomba: Chancellor College, Department of History, 1979.

Probst, Peter, "Dancing Aids, Moral Discourses and Ritual Authority in Central Malawi", Berlin: Institute für Ethnologie, Arbeitspapier no. 66, 1995.

Soko, Boston J., *The Vimbuza Phenomenon: Disease or Art*, Zomba: Chancellor College, French Department, occasional paper, 1981.

Spear, Thomas T., *Zwangendaba's Ngoni 1821 – 1890: A Political and Social History of a Migration*, African Studies Program, Occasional Paper No. 4, Madison: The University of Wisconsin, 1972.

Other Sources

The Nation, Newspaper, Blantyre, 6.1.2006, p. 18.

Corey Harris, Blues: Kotipaluu Part 1/7. Yle Teema (Finish documentary TV broadcast), 29.8.2008, 21.45.

Malawi Broadcasting Corporation, *Nkhani za m'Maboma*, 8.4.2010.

Interview with Evangelist Frank Saka, Apositoli a Yohane Masowe, Blantyre:
Weekend Nation, 4.3.2006, p. 10.

BBC World Channel, 21.2.2009. Broadcast on health-related issues concerning
cancer therapies.

God's Message Apostle, *Church Constitution According to God's Will*, Blantyre:
Jelusalem 20, A., Elijah Villa, n.d.

Department of Surveys, Blantyre, Map: *Sheet 8 Liwonde*, Blantyre, 1991.

Appendix

Wikilifi Chimawo, *THE ORIGIN OF THE ZION CHURCH IN 1930*, machine-typed document in Chinyanja, October 1979

(Chimawo's document has been translated from the Chinyanja. Reporting from the 1930s, this source is an important historical as well as theological document.)

On 16th June, 1930 there was Pentecost within the CCAP at M'gundadzuwa village in Dedza district. On that day, the first person to receive the Holy Spirit was Mr. Fanuel. The news were heard throughout the entire area. By the Holy Spirit, he was told to go to Blantyre to open the "house which had no door". He started the journey to Blantyre and when he reached Dedza Boma, the Lord told him *'to stop somewhere and pray before reaching a certain place called Mawe.'* Before he reached the place, he went into the bush and prayed, there the Spirit of the Lord told him to return back to M'gundadzuwa where he could start the healing ministry of the Lord.

Fanuel returned back to M'gundadzuwa village. After arrival, he asked the village headman to call all sick people in the village for healing prayers. The village headman invited all sick people in the village, everybody came, Fanuel prayed over everybody and they were all healed on the spot. These healing news spread throughout the area and up to the villages that were very far away from the place.

Fanuel left M'gundadzuwa village for Chimutu in Lilongwe. He found many sick people in that village upon arrival, he prayed for them and they were all instantly healed.

Three sick men in Tsoka village heard the healing message, they were Numeri Tsoka, Furedi and Filipo, these men started the journey from Tsoka village for Chimutu, they wanted to be healed, too. When they came to Chimutu, they found Fanuel there, he prayed with them and they were all healed instantly, and returned back home in good health.

On the following day, Fanuel went to Tsoka village and he spent the night there. While he was sleeping, he heard the voice of a suffering woman by the name of Rute, this woman was struggling with the power of the Holy Spirit

that was in her, she was the first woman to receive the Holy Spirit in the family.

Fanuel wrote a letter to Isaki who was living in Chikanda village, in Lilongwe. This man belonged to CCAP and was very sick. He was carried by relatives to Chimoka, where Fanuel was. He met the Lord's healer, he was prayed for and Isaki received his healing right there, together with the crowd present, they were all healed. At that time, Isaki was a church elder in CCAP. From this time on, the Lord's work started.

Many people received the Holy Spirit too, they were: Mumba Julubeki, Simion Tambala and Kambubvu, from Chinkhota village. More followers came in like Chikudzu Mizeke, all these people belonged to the CCAP. The missionaries tried to stop them but that was impossible because these people were not doing such things in their own power, but the power of the Holy Spirit controlled their lives. So this was the beginning of the Zion, at first the name of this church was *Ifa-ifa* the name was later changed to "*Zion*". The first pastor of the church was *Mizeke Chikudzu* and *Adiele Katsichi* was the church elder.

In 1931, a year after the formation of the church, Pastor Mizeke Chikudzu died and *Adiele Katsichi*, who had been the church elder, became the pastor of the church.C

After a short period of time, three pastors were appointed as leaders of the church, they were: Pastor Julubeki, Pastor Isake and Pastor Nyanda. Pastor Nyanda's home was at Malimba in Salima district. Pastor Tambala was from Lilongwe, he was appointed later to the position of a pastor.

Pastor Julubeki was appointed to go to Harare (Zimbabwe/Rhodesia) to preach the gospel as a missionary but when he returned back home to Nyasaland, he broke away and started his own Zion church similar to the *Ifa-ifa* church, but he started baptizing its members by immersion., some of the pastors who broke away with him were: Yoswa, Lubeke and Simenji.

Katsichi and Tambala were leaders but Luka and Adiele were pastors. All of them have died, Adiele died on 14th November, 1973, Simion Tambala died in April 1972 and Luka died on 11th February, 1974. Those that remained alive were: Numeri Tsoka and Lenadi Chinoko but after a short while, they died, too, Tsoka died on 13th September, 1978 and Luka died on 11th December, 1976.

The following are the current leaders: Wikilifi Chimawo, Yeremiya Chingalande, Kanadi and Gizayi. These are the leaders of this church in these days and the following people serve as pastors: Lenadi Chimphepo, Malitoni Chilombo, Samiyele Kabwinja, Sigeleti Kaputa, Mizeki Kaodzela, Gismoni Mwabwela, Alfred Kanad, Nyozwe Kang'oma Mission, Laban Cheza, Selemani Kasiya, Lezimati Dzombe, Gamaliel Chibungu and Lemani Nguwata. Another leader is Yosofati Kalinda.

The Law of Healing the Sick:

Brothers and sisters, this *Kang'oma Ekleziya* has its laws in praying for the sick. Anyone wishing to be prayed for when he is sick, first of all he must meet the church elders. The elders shall ask the person if he drinks beer, smokes cigarettes, practices witchcraft, possesses lucky charms or keeps any type of such medicine with the aim of using such them on himself, to use it for healing, for good luck or to prevent oneself from bad misfortunes, such people are not allowed in this Zion church. In addition to this, habits of drinking fermented sweet beers, drinking beer and smoking, all these are not allowed in this church. Neither is polygamy allowed.

If the sick person confesses with an honest and contrite heart that he has abandoned everything mentioned above and that he will not protect himself or his garden or house in a magical way, *mtsiriko*, all the charms will be burned after confession by the power of the Lord, he will then be healed on the spot and receive baptism. But if he did not reveal everything before the church elders and he did not repent with an honest heart before God, then such a person will not be received by the power of the Holy Spirit and it is not possible to lay hands on his head, but only those who have confessed and have repented before church elders and before God can be prayed for (Acts 9:34-35; Luke 10:20-21).

Clean animals for food:

Our Christian member is not allowed to eat any type of animal except the one that is allowed in the Holy Bible. (Leviticus 11:4-6).

Other laws say a Christian must obey and follow all the laws of the government and the Political Party. He must work hard for the development

of the country so that the church should not be put to shame (Exodus 20:15). A Christian must show a good example to everyone.

A Christian and his Christianity

A Christian must partake the Lord's Supper with a thankful heart, remembering Jesus and fearing God.

Any person seeking life should not cheat the church or church elders, because doing so he is not telling lies to the church or to church leaders but he is cheating God.

Anyone wishing to be baptized must contact church leaders where they gather together for meetings, he must confess all his sins and repent. Having done so he will receive baptism in a righteous way, because if he receives baptism in a deceitful way he has not lied to the church but he has lied to God.

The baptism in this Kang'oma Ekleziya is done by sprinkling on the forehead, but if the candidate was previously baptized on the head from another church that baptizes by sprinkling on the forehead, then there will be no need to re-baptize him, but the elders will just lay hands on his head, but if he was baptized by immersion, then he must be baptized by sprinkling water on his forehead.

After puberty, a girl in a Christian family shall be given instructions by women instructors. If she has been proposed for marriage or engagement, the wedding must be registered in the church and be announced to the congregation three weeks in advance and on the third Sunday the couple shall be married in church according to church laws.

Healing other sick people:

The number of sick people who are continually being healed is on the increase in the Lord's church of Kang'oma. The healed people we can remember come from Mchinj, Kasungu and Lilongwe districts.

Kasungu:

In Chipozha village in Kasungu district, there are many people belonging to Kang'oma church. The reputation of this church has spread far and wide because of their religious works.

It was during the month of April, 1976 when the news had already reached the M'duwa village in Mchinji. There was a lame child who was not able to walk for twelve years since she was born, her name was Anesi. When her parents heard the news from Chipozha in Kasungu regarding the people who were healing sick people through prayers, they decided to take their daughter to Chipozha village. They came to the village and were well received. The name of the father was Mr. Betala. They were given enough time to rest and after resting they were requested to confess and repent all their sins with an honest heart. The girl and the parents confessed and repented and after confession and repentance, the girl was prayed for and she was healed on the spot, she started walking. The heavens hear our prayers if we only confess and repent honestly. (James 5:14).

To this very day, Anesi is in good health and is able to walk as any other normal person. One interesting thing is that Anesi had twins and it is sad that one of the twins died.

Another case similar to this one is that of Abulamu village, in this village was a certain woman who was suffering from a swollen abdomen. When this woman heard how Anesi was healed, she too made up her mind to go to Chipozha [sic!] village. Upon arrival in the village, by their custom the woman was asked to confess and repent of all her sins, which she did. She was prayed for and she was healed instantly so that her abdomen was back to normal. This is how Kang'oma Zion Church holds its vision of healing.

Brothers and sisters, these things are not strange to the believers who can understand things and read because the Word of God says if you see you someone sick, call the church elders so that they can pray for him with the anointing of oil.

Healing some sick people in Mchinji:

In the same Mchinji district where paralytic Anesi came from, there was a crusade on 28th June, 1977 at M'duwa village. The news that there would be a crusade by Kang'oma Zion had already spread far, village headmen, women, men, boys and girls attended the crusade to hear the Word of God. Among the people who attended the crusade was a person blind from birth, he was 21 years old, this man had to struggle to find his way by means of his walking

stick that helped him to pass over rough and tough paths. When he arrived, he asked the church elders to pray for him so that he could see.

The elders agreed to pray for him but before doing so, they asked him to confess and repent of all his sins. The man confessed and repented with an honest heart all his sins and he was prayed for. He was instantly able to see, his blindness vanished and he was able to see very clearly, he started rejoicing, took his walking stick and put it under his armpit. This man was Malizeni, he came from Madala village in Mchinji district

Any person who doubts when he prays will not be healed but a person who has faith and is devoted will be healed because ‘heavens hear and feel pity.’

So we, as leaders together with all Christians, pray for the sick, those who hear and those who don’t hear, patients in hospitals and all those who need Jesus Christ. Let us all join together to thank God for His everlasting power.

In Lilongwe District:

In Kazumba village in Chief Khongoni’s area, there lived a mad person in 1956 and he was very dangerous indeed. The parents of the mad person heard the news about the people who were healing through prayers and that they were in Kazumba village. They brought their son to the elders, the elders told the parents to take their son to Kang’oma Mission for prayers.

When they had arrived at the Mission, the elders asked the parents to confess and repent of all their sins. The parents confessed and repented with an honest heart. Then they prayed over the son. After praying with him, the mad person was instantly healed. The name of the mad person was Nsabwe Abimaele.

In addition to this, in a neighboring village of Mateketa, in T/A Khongoni’s area, there lived another mad person, his name was Petulo. This man was brought to Kang’oma Mission, where he was prayed for, he was healed on the spot.

So, brothers and sisters, all these things are possible with the power of God who is Almighty, provided that we have holy hearts and pray.

At Muyande village in Chief Kabudula’s area, there was a man who was very sick and at the point of death. When Luka arrived, a man ‘full of the Holy Spirit’, he asked the sick person to repent, and after repenting he was prayed for, so the sick person was instantly healed.

At Mazinga village, Chief Khongoni, Lilongwe, there was a man who was suffering from liwombo [*anterior fontanelle*], his name was Divaison, he was an elderly person. He was told to confess and repent all his sins, he did and after prayers, he was healed right there.

At Mbalani village, also in Chief Khongoni's area, there was a certain mad person. He, like any other mad person mentioned already, was healed after being prayed for. This man is still alive at the time of this writing.

The people that were healed by the power of prayers are many so that it is not possible to count them all and to relate everything because we don't have enough space in this book to record them all.

THE LAWS CONCERNING FUNERAL CEREMONIES:

When a Christian member dies, whether a child or an adult, the first thing is to pray and preach the gospel of the Lord. When time comes to take the dead body to the grave for burial, we once again preach the Word of God and pray to the Lord. We do this because we want to ask the Almighty God to send us His Holy Spirit so that He may lead us in everything at the time we take the dead body to the grave yard for burial.

During the procession to the grave yard, only those in white robes are allowed to be at the front next to the coffin and those dressed in black, red and any other colour apart from white must walk at the rear. During this time, women too must put on white clothes. We sing songs during the procession, escorting our departed beloved to the place to where he has been called.

We put on white clothes because those who die in the Lord see the light and in front of them are people wearing white clothes. When someone dying sees black clothes it is a proof that he is heading for everlasting punishment. The followings are some of the signs that show one is heading for hell when dying:

- Wanting to have a knife during the struggle with death
- Requesting for beer or rushing for fire
- Shouting FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!

All these signs symbolize that the dying person did not follow our Lord's way of salvation.

Beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord, let us join hands to fight Satan the Devil and his evil works so that on the day of our death we should see the light followed by people wearing white clothes. It is true that we will all die including you reading this book. What shall we do on the judgment day?

Those assisting to carry the dead body:

When carrying the dead body to the grave yard, we don't forbid members of other religious organizations to carry the dead body, what we do is to request them to make sure that they put on white clothes and also to make sure that they don't wear lucky charms and the like in their pockets and that at this particular time they don't carry cigarettes in their pockets.

The Law of the Spirit – 1930

Since 1930, the Holy Spirit has been telling us the law a Christian must follow with his Christianity. The law is found in the Holy Book (the Bible) (Revelation 2:17 and Daniel 4:26).

A Christian must be very respectful, he must respect the elderly people, full of love and loving others as well as loving God, and he must not tell lies. (1 John 4 and Romans 13:1 says thieves, drunkards or anyone drinking sweet beer which is made of fermented maize or millet (chimera) is not worthy to be a Christian in this church. This is so because drinking beer is wanting to get intoxicated and drinking sweet beer is the beginning of drinking beer itself. Cruelty and fighting are sins. The Kang'oma Church accepts people who are patient, meek and tolerant, those law abiding citizens are most welcome.

WORDS SPOKEN BY ADIELE KATSICHI ON 30^T JULY, 1930:

"To all my brothers and sisters, listen to how the Holy Spirit came upon me on 30th June, 1930.

I received the Spirit of God at 10 pm on 30th July, 1930. The Angel of the Lord came to me, his name was FANUWELE. He instructed me in the way of the Lord.

The Lord sent me to Malimba (Salima) to preach the gospel of the Lord and to heal the sick there. On 3rd October, 1930, I went to Mvera Mission in Dowa district.. There I met a white missionary whose name was SITONDOMU. I explained to him on how the Spirit of the Lord came to me on 30th July. After having heard this, he sent me back to my missionary home at Dzenza in order to get a confirmation letter from a certain white missionary by the name of SITENKEMANI (Stinking man). He gave me the confirmation letter so that I could give it to the white missionary at Mvera. I started my trip to Mvera and delivered the letter to SITONDOMU. But he refused to give me official permission to go to Salima for preaching the Gospel and heal the sick. There we had a conflict so that while we were exchanging words he suddenly got sick, I realized that God was angry with him and I told him that God was angry with him.

I started my journey to Salima. I arrived at Moya village, there I found 9 sick people. After having confessed they repented and I prayed with them, they all got healed in the spot, and that was on 7th October, 1930.

While there in Salima, I proceeded to a certain village called Mwanza where I found 4 sick people. They were prayed over and got healed. This happened on the 8th of October 1930.

I proceeded with my journey and reached a place called Chipole where I met a friend of mine by the name of Labani Mumba. After having crossed two rivers, Thavite and Lifoshima, we found 56 sick people. We prayed with them and they all got healed. We also prayed for other sick people at Mtete village, 27 of them. They got healed instantly, too. I started baptizing people in the year 1932, after having stayed in the church for two years. This was on 15th May 1932.

The government officials received me well after I had started baptizing and everything went fine.

On 21st February 1936, a certain woman died in the village Karonga, this was at the area of chief Kabudula, Lilongwe district. This woman had been dead for two days, but then she came back to life. When she came back to life, she explained everything she had seen in heaven. She said that the heavens had refused her. They (the heavens) also refused any kind of [biomedical] medicine to heal the sick and any kind of idolatry, which is a

great sin in the eyes of God. After she had testified to what the Zion church is doing, she died again.

My dear brothers in the Lord, be strong and not shaken, when you are doing the work of the Lord (Luk.21, 34-35).

Therefore, I am the servant of the Lord, stay well."

How did God reveal Himself in the Beginning?

In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the earth; Gen. 1,1, says the Lord who created the heavens. He is the one who created the earth and made it. He established it. He did not create it in vain, he made earth so that people should dwell on it.

"I am Yehovah, there is none besides me, I have declared righteousness, I speak what is true." Isa. 45, 18f.

What did God do so that people should know him?

Ps. 19,1: The heavens declare God's glory and the skies show the works of his hands.

What is God's nature?

"Do you not know? Did you not hear? God is everlasting. Yehovah, the creator of the earth's boundaries, will not be weak nor exhausted, and his wisdom cannot be checked, Isa. 40, 28.

What does God want from us?

Our Lord God wants us to fear him, worship him and walk in his ways according to his will. He wants us to love him, to serve him with our whole heart, with all our wisdom, with all our means and together with our entire life.

Can an unrepentant person know the ways of God?

A person without the Holy Spirit refuses to know the things of the Holy Spirit. He thinks them foolish and without value. He is not willing to know them. A man comes to himself by receiving the Holy Spirit, 1.Cor. 2,4.

What separates man from God?

Our wickedness has separated us from God and our sins hide the face of God so that the Lord cannot hear (Isa. 59, 2).

What is sin?

Anything unrighteous and missing the aim is sin (1. John 5, 17).

Do all people sin?

"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, which he has prepared for them." Rom. 3, 23.

What is the reward of sin?

"Sin came into the world through one man, and sin brought death so that death came to everybody because all have sinned." Rom. 5, 12.

What does God feel towards sinners?

"Behold, says the Lord, I am not pleased with the death of the sinner, but I want them all to repent so that they must have life." Eze. 33, 11.

Does God do anything to punish for sins?

"For God so loved the world, so that he gave his only begotten son, who died for them on the cross, so that anyone believing in Him and do his will in the Son, should be saved and receive everlasting life in heaven." Joh. 3, 16.

What must we do to be saved?

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Acts. 16, 31.

Why did Jesus Christ die for us on the cross?

He died for us to save us from the punishment and fierce destruction from the hands of Satan. (1) Peter 1, 18f

Is there any other way to be saved?

Only by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, there is none else who can save people, there is on earth no other name by God through which people can be saved, Acts 4,10-12.

Is it possible for us to know that our sins have been forgiven?

Jesus was killed to save us from our sins. He rose again from the grave so that we should be righteous before God, Rom. 4, 25.

Jesus said, I am the Way, the Light and the Truth, none comes to the Father except by me. Joh. 14, 6.

Index

Abortion 279, 375.

Admission to meetings 217f.

African Assemblies of God 158, 276.

African Traditional Religion 22f, 214,
268, 271f, 282f, 453f.

AFM 75f, 87, 125ff, 145, 277, 325, 410,
420, 437, 458, 463-466, 469, 474f.

AIC 4-9, 15, 35, 43f, 209, 213f, 265,
296f, 311, 323, 357, 410, 425ff, 443,
445, 454, 458, 480f.

AIDS / Hiv 259, 376, 380, 382, 433, 439.

Alcohol 40, 79, 82, 147, 200, 218, 222,
275, 278-281, 318, 336, 386, 525,
530f.

Amish communities 322.

Ancestral worship 58, 187, 366-369,
453f.

Androcentrism 196, 391, 397, 405.

Angels 111, 173, 328, 338f, 357, 368,
422, 470.

Anglican Church 10, 12, 28, 42, 62, 73,
85f, 100, 118, 169, 183, 343, 395.

Apostoli Zion Church (16) 139f, 151,
171, 191, 228, 331, 336, 339, 353,
360, 470.

Apostolic Faith Church (7) 125-127, 78,
121, 141f, 145, 165, 178, 287, 325,
355, 363, 376, 379, 382, 386, 394,
407, 412, 431, 448, 451f, 464.

Apositoli Zion Sabbath Church (27)
156f, 277, 301, 359f, 377, 395, 411.

Apparel 167-175; 6, 92, 116, 130, 161,
274, 303, 322, 328, 337, 389f, 404f,
457, 476.

Assemblies of God 44, 143, 145, 190,
389, 463, 465f.

Azimayi aMvano s. mvano!

Backsliding 200f, 205f, 302-304, 331,
379.

Banda, Dr. H. Kamuzu 181, 343, 443,
448-450.

Baptism 323-332; 38, 44, 78, 91f, 95,
111f, 172, 223, 229, 262, 264, 276,
291f, 297, 312, 369, 346, 452, 457,
526.
of infants 150, 324f, 328, 377, 454,
456.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit 12, 14, 17,
31, 45, 76, 100, 469, 470f.

Bible, usage of 311-316, 8, 13, 27, 119,
121, 136, 192, 202, 206, 260, 280f,
284, 295, 329, 334, 338, 361f, 377,
396, 405, 427, 437, 442, 458, 461,
466f, 483.

Beard (shaving) 402ff, 40, 42, 81, 284,
318, 467.

Bigamy s. polygamy.

Birth-giving 375-378, 196, 222, 284,
388f, 400.

Bishop, office of 340-357, 81, 229, 275,
317, 318, 326, 358-361, 391, 393f,
412, 435, 437f, 471, 478.

Booth, Joseph 63f.

Bryant, Daniel 75.

Büchler, Rev. J.U. 75.

- Cattle – herding 428f, 241, 282, 398, 419, 467.
- CCACZ (1) 89-97, 102, 105, 119, 133ff, 138f, 141-148, 151, 156-166, 188, 198, 216, 224f, 250, 260, 278f, 298, 302, 308, 315f, 320, 326f, 329, 332, 339, 346, 348, 351, 353-355, 367, 375, 383, 398, 402, 404, 407, 409-411, 413, 420, 431, 437, 446, 449, 464, 474, 476.
- from the USA: 37, 42, 75.
- CCAP 65, 73, 89, 110, 122, 183, 190f, 231, 343, 357, 392, 457, 523f.
- Chakanza, Joseph C. iv, 102, 123, 362.
- Footnotes: 63, 73, 91, 113, 125, 141, 147, 161, 170, 231, 289, 297f.
- Chaluluka, Foster 101-103, 483
- Chaluluka, Feresi, nee Mtokoma 101, 219, 418f
- Chauncy Maples, MV 86
- Chawango, Nixon Zalengera 154f
- Chewa people 58-62, 20, 52-56, 78, 111, 236, 238, 244, 269, 317, 378, 380, 387, 391, 399f, 410, 417, 424, 441, 449, 477.
- Chief: see politics!
- Chikumbutso Church 170.
- Chikuse, Morris Anderson Gomani 93f (56), 445f.
- Children 374-391, 50, 71f, 145, 225, 260, 263, 298, 302, 307, 324, 329, 331, 399f, 408, 413, 424, 430, 433, 450, 460, 465.
- Child-spacing 374f, 403.
- Chilembwe, John 91, 443, 455-457.
- Chimasula, Amos 93f, 131, 147f, 463.
- Chimawo, Wikilifi 108, 113f, 523ff.
- Chinamwali s. initiation
- Chinguwo, Robert 126f, 78, 475.
- Chipiliro Zion Church (12) 134f, 145, 160, 223, 336, 386, 434, 436, 454.
- Chipulumutso Zion Church (29) 158, 216, 225, 329, 347, 356f, 366, 394.
- Chirikumbuyo, Samson 150, 48.
- Christian Apostolic Sabbath Church in Zion (13) 135f, 48, 142, 148, 150, 153, 261, 277, 324, 449, 475.
- Church discipline 154, 177, 409, 415.
- Churches of Christ 62, 466.
- Circumcision 378-380, 284, 387.
- Coffee 232, 230, 278, 284.
- Colonialism 69ff, 443-447, 85, 103, 107, 121, 126, 130, 342f, 455, 476, 481.
- health system 239-243, 253.
- Comaroff, Jean 49, 78.
- Confession of sins 309ff, 217f, 222, 225, 253, 295, 333, 525, 527.
- Contraception 374f.
- Conversion 274f, 26-28, 33, 77f, 115f, 264, 285, 292, 295, 356, 368, 406, 430, 451, 466.
- contrition of heart 328f, 525.
- Crosby, Fanny 190.
- Dambo, Bishop John 159, 476.
- Dambo, Lastin 278.
- Dancing 175-188, 192-197, 235-238, 265-271, 12f, 214f, 216f, 224f, 228, 252, 257f, 274, 300, 304-307, 308,

- 318, 372, 378, 381f, 384, 394f, 401f, 415, 417, 423, 438f, 469, 471, 480.
- kubonga: 177-179, 186-191, 194, 269, 401, 438f.
- seji: 177-179, 187, 191, 194, 269, 306, 315, 469.
- Defilement, ritual 297-299, 376-378, 120, 173, 196, 256, 260, 274, 282, 284, 295, 322, 326, 332, 338, 396, 398, 403, 415, 420f, 424, 443, 447, 467, 474.
- Deprivation theory 481, 426.
- Delilah syndrome: s. women!
- Deremani ceremony 438-440.
- Diagnosing sickness 221-225, 218f, 252, 255, 265, 272, 471.
- Diaspora 31, 70, 81.
- Dietary laws 278-285, 6, 38, 111, 232, 276, 286, 292, 302-306, 389, 457, 462.
- Dimba, Bishop Welford B. 148f, 48, 145, 147, 154, 346.
- Dingiswayo, John Wesley Newton 103-108, 319, 474f.
- Dissent s. Separatism in churches!
- Dissociation see Trance
- Dowie, John Alexander 35-46, 75, 82, 87, 100, 116, 146, 168, 170, 182, 222, 261, 280, 315, 318f, 324, 405, 469, 483.
- Dreams 356-358, 235, 94, 111, 119, 158, 225, 227, 339.
- Drumming 116-123, 265-273, 12f, 23, 25, 42, 89, 92-94, 96, 105f, 111-113, 134, 141, 164f, 176-178, 181, 183, 187, 216f, 225, 237f, 247, 257f, 304, 308, 313, 322, 345, 368, 381, 401, 449, 452, 474, 476.
- Dunga, Bishop Stanford J. 155.
- Dutch Reformed Church 59-61, 108-110, 65, 75, 95, 116, 120, 122, 165, 244f, 292, 325, 403, 428, 456, 472f.
- Dzonzi, D.W. 102.
- Dzonzi, Bishop Livison 145, 436.
- Economics 259, 431ff.
- Ecstasy 265-271, 10, 20f, 27, 120, 255, 372.
- Education 100, 104, 174, 435, 383-385, 431, 468, 482, 487, theological 162, 436-438, 358-361 through missionaries 60ff, 84-87, 245, 444f, 455
- Elections (in churches) 354f, 96, 107f, 136, 351f.
- Entopia Zion Church (9) 130ff, 137f, 157, 164, 172, 352, 367, 409.
- Entopia Zion Church (14) 137f, 142, 151, 155, 165, 275f, 346, 354, 359, 367, 377f, 381, 394, 415, 422, 435, 441, 443, 448, 452, 477f.
- Entopia Zion City Church (28) 157f, 223, 336, 409.
- Eschatology 420-423, 38, 452, 462.
- Ethiopianism 454-458, 6, 49, 76, 114, 281, 313, 445, 487f.
- Evangelical churches 8, 10, 38, 42, 63f, 149, 159, 278, 347, 422, 465, 484f, 487.
- theology 12, 27, 44, 173, 190, 249, 276, 306, 315, 322, 462f, 476, 479.

- Evangelical Bible College of Malawi 437, 476.
- Evangelism 304-307, 274-285, 32, 41, 65, 77f, 116, 146, 179ff, 212f, 219, 262f, 296, 300, 302f, 345, 348f, 361, 396, 399, 426, 444, 451, 460f, 469.
- Exilic religion 39f, 62, 70, 72, 78, 116, 147, 188, 191, 220, 280-283, 319, 361, 422f, 426f, 450, 467, 481.
- Exorcism 223f, 37, 200, 245, 249, 267, 273, 291, 332.
- Extra ecclesiam nulla salus: 340.
- Family 374-391, 72, 79-82, 149, 263, 280f, 304, 307, 413f, 416, 419f, 452.
- Famine of 1949 308, 413.
- Fiedler, Klaus vi, 37, 63, 122, 449.
- Finances 259, 359; s. also economics!
- Flags 232f, 112, 310, 446, 450, 457.
- Funeral rites 414-420, 54f, 171f, 191, 261, 280, 299, 306, 319, 332, 342, 348, 365, 367, 398, 404, 421, 424, 428, 433f, 530f.
- Geertz, Clifford 337, 425.
- Geka, Haken 93.
- Gender differences 385-405, 471.
- Glossolalia 469f, 15-17, 32, 38, 41, 45, 76, 100-102, 109, 271, 318, 454, 466.
- Gomez, Thompson 298, 333ff, 413.
- Hara, Lameck James 94f, 133f, 143, 352, 411.
- Hara, Stanley 133f.
- Health 215-225, 239-264, 72, 233f, 237, 267f, 376, 425, 443, public in Malawi 296, 488.
- Healing, faith or spirit
 ~ homes 39, 41, 107, 122, 224, 235f, 250f.
 holistic 254f, 72, 253, 295, 457, 483.
 as counter-sorcery 293ff.
 as a recruiting device 300ff, 41, 145.
 from addictions 200, 218, 222, 230ff, 264, 275, 281.
 rites 224ff, 300ff, 292f.
 traditional 233-238, 82, 113, 168, 226, 228, 247, 252-255, 259, 265, 268, 454.
 weight of ~ 295-299.
- Healers 225-233, 234-238, 247-262, 41, 152, 168, 216, 218, 224, 244f, 272f, 288, 293, 298ff, 394, 454, 471.
- Hebraist element 8f, 38, 181, 277, 282, 312f, 321, 371f, 425, 427.
- Hefner, Robert W. 484f.
- Hlavu, Two Days 128ff.
- Holy Apostolic Church in Zion (3) 97 - 103, 118, 170, 176f, 186, 188, 205, 207, 219, 249, 276, 278, 308, 325, 347f, 354f, 376, 380, 395, 412, 417f, 419, 428, 437, 447, 459, 469.
- Holy Spirit 370, 9f, 12-17, 27f, 75f, 110, 117, 191, 225f, 230, 247, 254, 264, 272, 306, 322, 328, 332, 339, 368, 393, 396, 463, 466, 469ff, 479.
- Horwood, Major Ted: 390.
- Huva, Petro 106.

Identity of the Zionists s. Zionism
 Immanence 10-16, 120, 488.
 Initiation 378-385, 386, 399, 424, 427, 459.
 Chinamwali 53, 55, 380.
 International Bible College Berea vi, 155, 437.
 Ifa-ifa Christian Zion Church (4) 108-111, 95, 165, 225, 231, 325, 346, 368, 374, 418, 456, 473, 477.
 Independency of Churches 311, 472-478, 100, 113, 315, 341, 344, 360, 434, 467, 488.
 Islam 451f, 221, 290, 325, 379, 401, 409, 461.

 Jazz 32f, 193.
 Jesus Christ 9-15, 29, 90f, 198ff, 208, 252, 276, 319, 366, 370, 372f, 387, 440, 463, 535.
 ~ as healer: 36, 41, 223, 228, 300.
 Jordan Zion ya Bata Church (5) 111-113, 95f, 232, 352, 448.
 Joyce, James 35, 37.

 Kakhobwe, Herbert 125-127, 78, 145, 165, 325, 363, 463, 475.
 Kadalie, Clements 88.
 Kadwala, village 91, 138f.
 Kalambule, Lighton 125, 463.
 Kaleke, Alstone Yohane 151f, 48, 355, 442.
 Kalombola, Kachilowa 152, 164, 355, 441f.
 Kamwana, Elliot 91, 456.
 Kamwana, Venancio Naidze 139f, 151, 353, 395.
 Kamwendo, Gresan Abraham 156f, 301, 360.
 Kandodo, Goodson Gabriel 139f, 228, 339, 353, 360, 395.
 Kanjere, Satifiketi 137f, 47ff, 62, 131, 142, 148, 151f, 155, 165, 275, 346, 354, 359, 367, 378f, 394, 422, 435, 441ff, 449.
 Kapito, Lucy 393.
 Katsichi, Adiyele 108-114, 165, 472f, 524f, 531ff.
 Kawenga, Natani 111-113, 95f, 108, 352f.
 Kayange, Samuele 93-96.
 Kulanga, Rev. Wellem B. vi, 364.

 Lake, John G. 41, 44, 87, 100, 146, 227, 235, 325.
 Leadership 340-361, 76, 96, 98, 102ff, 107f, 164, 277, 394, 401, 427, 437f.
 local 12, 130, 161.
 transition 351-358, 126f, 128, 157, 162, 486f.
 Legalism 275-285, 192, 303, 373, 462.
 Lekganyane, Engenas 128f, 187, 344, 363f, 478.
 LeRoux, Peter L., 75f, 168.
 Ligopolo, L. 138, 354, 379.
 Liminal state 197, 72, 216, 280, 327, 377.
 Lisimba, Thomson 333.

Literacy 436f, 11, 24, 28, 87, 189, 194,
 202, 314, 343, 396.
 Lutheran 5, 9, 45, 281, 319.
 theology 10, 30, 369.
 Lyrics 188-192, 79, 94, 111, 179-186,
 193, 207, 468.

 Mabilitsa, Paul M. 88, 123.
 Machona Migrant Labourers 69-83, 85,
 89, 91, 93, 103, 105, 114-116, 121,
 123, 129, 137, 142, 145, 147, 150,
 162f, 166, 169, 172, 184, 187, 239,
 241, 249f, 254, 256, 273, 321, 344,
 350, 390, 401, 404, 446, 458, 467,
 475, 477f, 482, 484, 487.
 Magagula, Lipenga P. F. 135-137, 48,
 142, 148-150, 261, 277, 324, 449,
 475f.
 Mahon(e), Edgar 75, 147.
 Makoko, Payambe E. 138f, 223, 249,
 254, 339, 347, 419.
 malingaka (of drums) ix, 96, 119, 121,
 165, 176, 271, 476.
 Manong'a, Rafold 153, 48.
 Marriage 406-414, 305, 38, 80, 134,
 143, 280f, 302, 348, 374, 390f, 403.
 remarriage 412f.
 traditional 50, 53, 70, 378.
 Masina, Elifala J. J. 140
 Mbale Mbuu 298, 362, 458, 461.
 Mbedza, Genesis 89-93, 99, 101, 170,
 443.
 Mbedza, Estere nee Mtokoma 93, 101,
 118.
 Mbekeyani, George Loti 96, 360.
 Mbeta, Samuel 89, 92f, 105.
 mchape movement 73f, 125, 289.
 Medi, James 253.
 Medicine 215-273, 38, 40, 82, 92, 101,
 111f, 113, 170, 208, 331, 375f, 414f.
 care for population 72, 243.
 colonial ~ 239-243.
 missions 243, 246, 37, 100.
 refusing treatment 101, 106, 127,
 145, 251, 260, 278, 282, 297f, 460,
 487, 533.
 splits over it 143-146, 126f, 131f, 134,
 138, 141f, 148-153, 158, 161, 165,
 281f, 297ff, 318, 351, 415, 435, 460,
 465f, 477, 484, 487.
 traditional ~ 233-238, 228, 248, 294.
 Men 399-405; s. also androcentrism
 Mental sickness 224f, 243, 250f, 258,
 308, 447.
 Mfecane s. Ngoni!
 M'gomezulu, R. B. 129f.
 Ministry, spiritual 345ff, 396, 88, 108,
 317.
 qualification for 78, 162, 435ff.
 mission stations 60-65, 84, 183.
 Missionaries 472-478, 344, 5, 43f, 56,
 59-61, 64, 75, 78, 84, 85f, 98, 108f,
 110, 116, 126f, 142, 144f, 161ff, 182ff,
 244-246, 281, 311, 343, 376, 378, 384,
 389, 437, 445, 466f, 468.
 Mlangeni, Eston Thomas 158-160, 201,
 261, 304, 359, 414, 476.
 Mlevi and Alevi: 345-351, 207, 216, 255,
 270, 331, 335, 377.
 Mlungamanja, Simon 103-108, 316.

Mozambique 5, 51, 71, 89, 99, 104,
 106, 108, 129, 130, 135-139, 141, 150,
 305, 317, 359, 378f, 395, 421, 429,
 435, 468, 478.
 Healers from ~ 174, 251, 261, 298f.

Mpingo wa Atumwi (17) 140-142, 121,
 161, 165, 170, 353, 409, 419, 435,
 454, 465.

Mtokoma, Wilson Lazaro 97, 102, 118,
 123, 219, 355.

Murray, A. C. 59, 108.

Murray, Andrew 75, 108f, 122.

Music 175-197, 265-273, 17, 20, 24, 32,
 46, 94, 96, 117, 120, 122, 167, 214f,
 237, 257f, 312, 318, 407, 465, 471,
 480.

Mvano (Sisters' guild) 392ff, 169.

Mysticism 9-21, 23-35, 479-488, 46,
 167, 193, 228, 236, 256, 269f, 283,
 370, 425, 452, 463.

Nda, Bishop 154, 48.

New Bible Zion Church (26) 155, 412.

New Jerusalem Zion Church (10) 132,
 145, 172, 409.

New Jerusalem Zion Church (19) 149f,
 48, 165, 175, 217, 226, 230f, 293, 305,
 360, 375, 393, 402, 407, 412, 433.

Ngwenyama, Fraction M. 157, 131, 164.

Ngwenyama, Matthew S.M. 130f, 137f,
 144, 164, 352, 367, 409.

Ngodzo, Wells 134f, 223.

Ngoni 47-68, 75-83, 93ff, 103f, 111,
 113-123, 129-142, 148ff, 163f, 170f,
 180, 222f, 233-238, 243-246, 268,
 272, 279f, 284, 288, 316f, 324, 332,
 341ff, 365, 376, 378, 380, 384, 389,
 391, 398-409, 413, 415, 419f, 424,
 426, 428, 335, 441, 446-449, 453, 459,
 477, 480f, 486.

dances 116-120, 180-188.

labour 69-75.

mfecane 47-68, 135, 237, 378, 426.

religion 57-68

Nguni s. Zulu people

Ng'ombe, Enosi Numeri 103-107, 316-
 323, 134, 147, 159, 164, 261, 351,
 364-366, 442f, 456, 462.

Ngulube, J. B. 132, 409.

Ordinances 323-339, 12, 116, 275, 346,
 349, 361, 370, 402, 408.

Ordination: 39, 93, 130, 344, 347, 349,
 351, 398.

Paper 343.

Parham, Charles Fox 44.

Paulosi, W. 140f, 161.

Pentecostalism 30-46, 22-29, 463-472,
 1-21, 75-79; 87, 100f, 104, 108f, 114,
 116f, 121ff, 125ff, 134, 142-146, 155,
 165, 169, 184, 197, 202, 206, 208,
 212f, 223, 249, 260, 262, 271, 275,
 278, 285, 293ff, 300, 303, 306f, 309,
 314f, 318, 322, 325, 336, 341, 347,
 357, 359, 369, 376, 384, 392f, 416,
 422, 424, 426, 430, 434, 436f, 454,
 458, 461, 475, 479, 480, 483ff.

Phenomenology 9, 18ff, 35, 59, 249,
 274, 479f, 485.

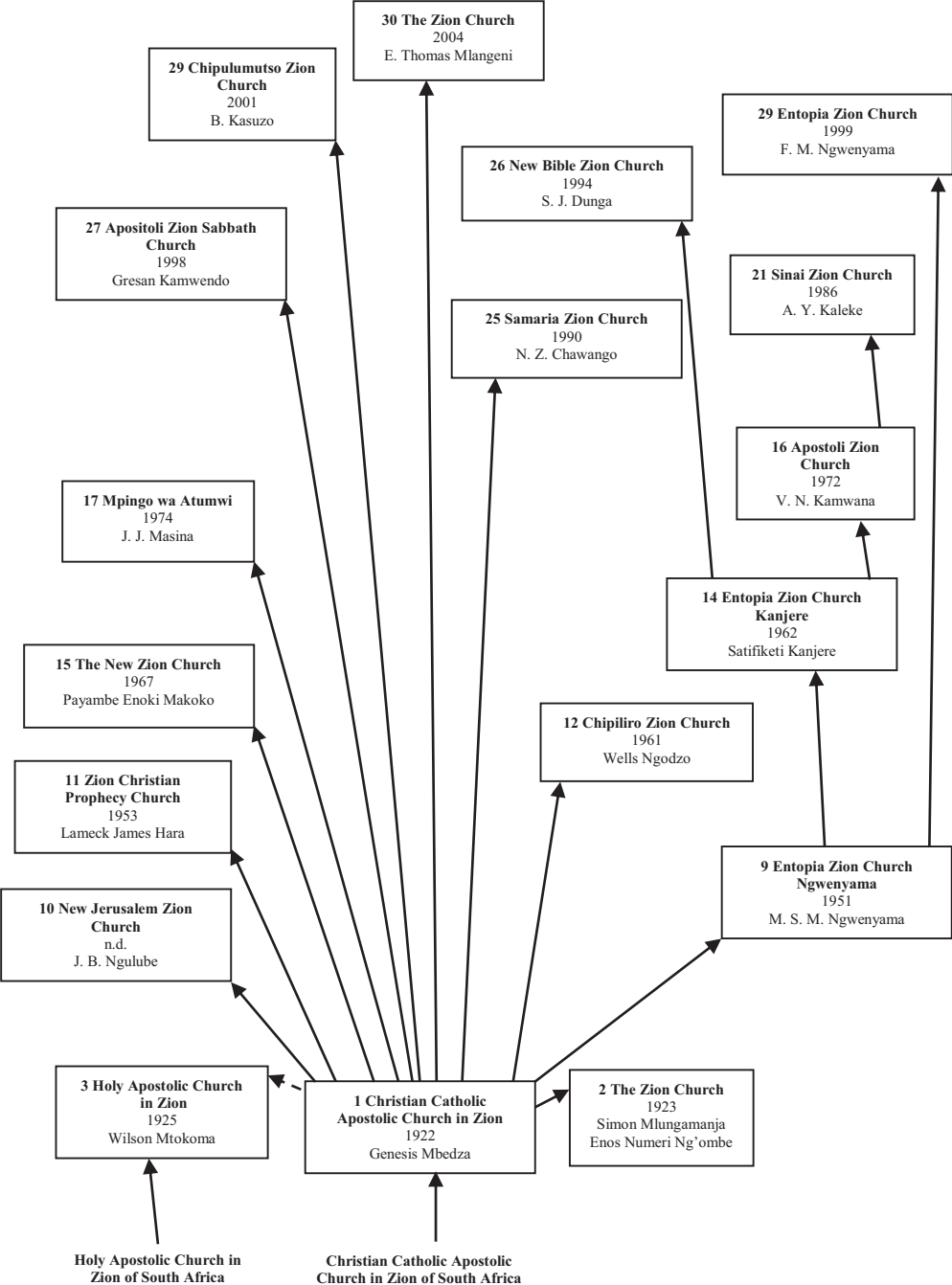
- Phillips, John George 84-93, 97-104, 115-118, 123, 470.
- Phiri, Kagwati 153, 48.
- Phiri, Kasuzo Square 158, 225, 276, 329, 347, 356f, 366.
- Polygamy 142f, 406-412, 115, 131ff, 138, 157, 161-166, 318, 351, 390, 462, 525.
- Bigamy 132, 409.
- Politics 438-451, 53ff, 66-68, 76f, 79, 94, 146f, 152f, 164, 236, 271, 281, 288, 305, 322, 341-344, 354, 371, 422, 457f, 473, 481-488, 526.
- Local chieftainships 438-450, 47, 53, 56, 61, 66f, 86, 88, 93, 109, 152, 206, 236, 279, 289, 317, 322, 341f, 352, 365, 371, 385, 398, 420.
- Prayer 307-311, 223-233, 11, 33, 41, 109f, 128, 145, 153, 172, 175f, 179, 216f, 219, 249, 251f, 257f, 262f, 271, 275, 290f, 306, 332, 336, 375f, 393, 415, 417, 441, 454, 471, 523-532.
- Preachers & preaching 192-215, 345, 11f, 24f, 27, 42, 43, 78, 86f, 92, 104f, 122, 131-133, 140, 167, 224, 247, 254f, 264, 279, 287, 292, 300, 303f, 310, 315, 318, 321, 335, 338, 348f, 351, 392-396, 398, 401f, 406, 416, 418, 436, 438f, 452, 460f, 466f, 470, 473, 524, 530, 532.
- preparatio evangelica 63
- Prophets & prophesying 216-225, 172-175, 355f, 11ff, 32, 42, 111, 119, 148, 151, 212, 226-228, 230, 232-235, 350, 235, 248, 251f, 255ff, 265, 270-273, 291, 294, 299, 309f, 321, 326, 331, 332, 337, 338f, 349f, 352, 362, 371f, 375, 393, 395-398, 407, 425-427, 456, 469ff, 484.
- Purification ceremonies 376f, 92, 284, 311f, 332, 338, 368, 396, 405, 415, 420f, 424.
- Purity, ritual see defilement!
- Racial reconciliation 32, 38.
- Read, Margaret 378.
- Religion
- and emotions 4, 14, 18ff, 283, 349.
 - and culture, general 6f, 78, 484f.
 - and social reality 254, 284f, 320f, 397, 426f, 467.
 - choice of 79, 302f, 482.
 - visual elements of 45f.
 - religious ferment 30f.
 - structural vs. salvific 282f.
- Ritual among Zionists 92, 258, 284f, 323-339, 374-428, 446.
- of rebellion 179f.
 - other churches 10, 459.
 - traditional 20, 24, 232, 233ff, 268, 453.
- Robes 168-175, 42, 45f, 77f, 92, 111, 113, 120, 125, 126, 130, 141, 153, 167, 217, 281, 307, 313, 318, 337, 360, 404, 410, 416, 418, 427, 452, 458, 461, 465, 467, 530.
- Roman Catholic Church 5, 10, 12, 34f, 42, 61, 63, 73, 122, 135, 140, 169f, 183, 292, 343, 429.
- Royall, Francis M. 97-101, 118.

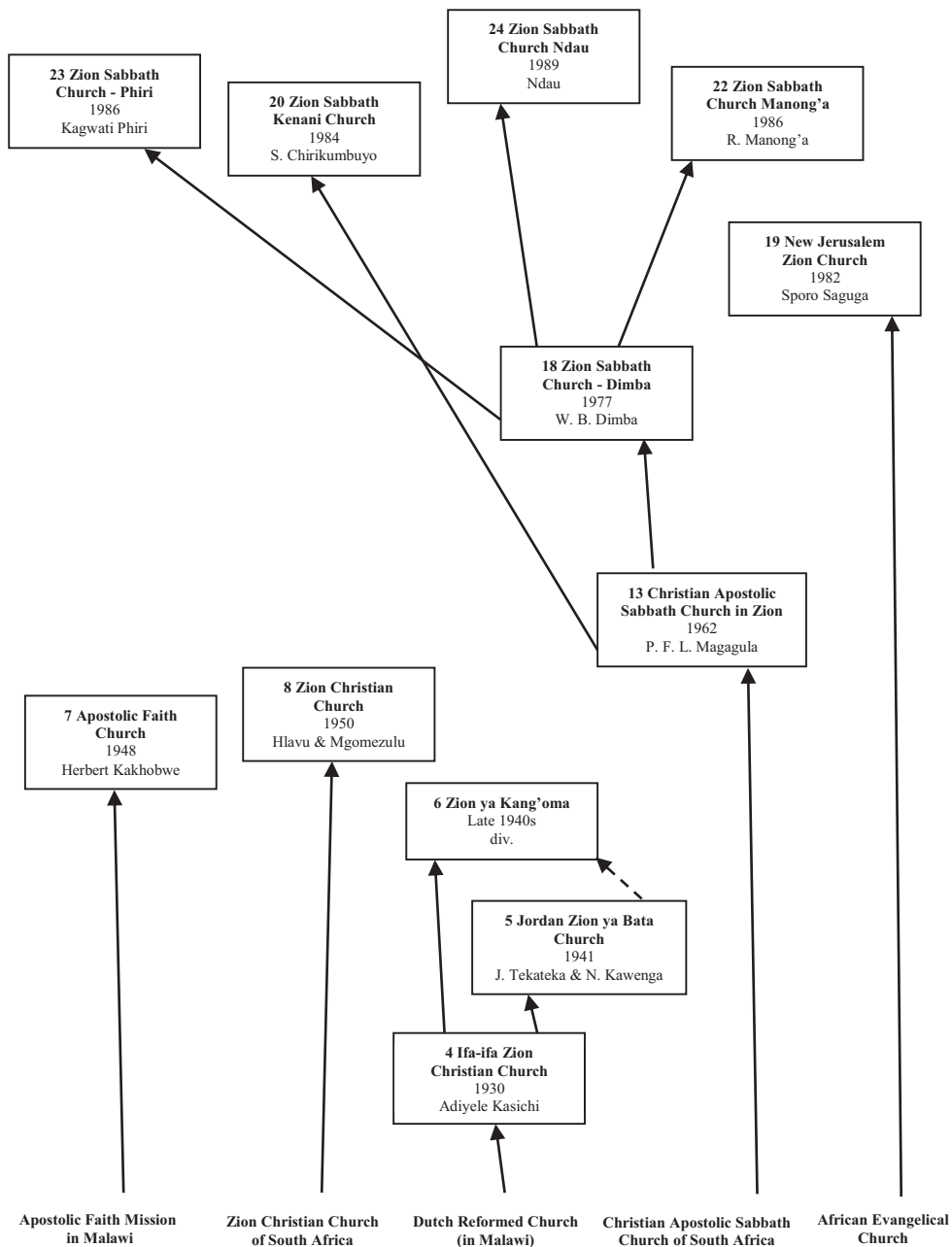
- Rural havens 83, 422f, 435, 467, 486.
- Sabbathism 142-148, 148-156, 163-166, 277f, 30, 40, 48, 135f, 138f, 167, 284, 321.
- Sacramentalism 257, 338, 480.
- Sacraments see Ordinances!
- Saguga, Sporo and Liwiza 149f, 48, 165, 175, 217, 231, 302, 360, 375, 407.
- Salvation 274-339, 361-373, 158, 213, 255, 361, 370, 421, 423, 451, 462, 486, 531, 535.
- Samaria Zion Church (25) 154f, 304f, 337, 345, 407, 414, 421, 437, 446.
- Schisms s. Separatism in churches!
- Scott, David C. 55f, 183, 350.
- SDA 104, 136ff, 142, 166, 306.
- Secularization 58, 144, 163, 482f.
- Seghers, Greg 159, 476.
- Selective Conservatism s. Traditioning!
- Separatism in churches 161-166; 45, 76, 96f, 102, 110f, 113, 131, 133, 136f, 143f, 148f, 151, 153f, 158f, 160, 277, 279, 351f, 353, 409f, 454, 456, 458, 465, 472, 476, 484.
- Settlements 38-40, 316-323; 77, 83, 107, 129, 197, 228, 261, 275, 297, 361, 365, 422f, 434, 440, 442f, 449, 462, 477.
- Sexual polarity 383.
- Shumaker, Van Buren 97-106, 118, 474.
- Simmel, George 19, 283.
- Sinai Zion Church (21) 48, 151f, 164, 171, 332, 355, 359, 380, 442.
- Sisters' Union s. Mvano!
- Slave religion (USA) 22-30, 31, 34, 45, 81, 184, 193, 271, 485.
- Spirit possession 9, 266f, 397.
traditional African 20, 23, 25f, 29f, 43, 122, 176, 220f, 234, 235-238, 268, 290.
demonic 198, 205, 223, 234, 287, 303.
- Spiritual field 9-21; 23-35; 41f, 45, 92, 116, 122, 167, 179, 182, 184, 194, 216, 222, 256, 269, 271, 285, 321, 337f, 370, 393, 395ff, 402, 422, 425, 456, 463, 471, 479f.
- Splits s. separatism in churches
- Strohbehn, Ulf (footnote references only) 12, 33, 41, 75, 77, 78, 109, 121, 126, 142, 145, 212, 224, 272, 293, 312, 343, 466, 472, 477, 484.
- Structure, social in society 6f, 25, 78f, 81, 270, 288, 322, 354, 372, 391, 397, 430, 450, 467f, 482.
- Succession 40, 56, 76, 103, 107, 112, 133, 136, 341f, 352ff.
- Sundkler, Bengt 4, 7, 34, 49, 88, 123, 168, 272, 341, 344, 356, 369f, 416, 445, 481.
- Symbolism 337-339; 171-175, 20, 58, 63, 95, 120, 168, 184, 187, 194f, 207, 211, 231f, 253, 280f, 294, 299, 310, 323ff, 471, 478.
- Tembwe, Steven 107.
- Tekateka, Mumba Julubeki 110f.

Testifying 275, 32f, 39, 82, 254, 259,
 261, 282, 291, 301, 304, 308, 328,
 368, 465.
 Taboos 279-286; 22f, 77, 92, 235, 386,
 388f, 391, 394, 405, 416, 446.
 Thamanda Church 139, 150.
 The Zion Church (2) 103-108; 316-323;
 120, 159, 164, 170, 175, 178, 217,
 220, 229, 250, 261, 290, 292, 297,
 300, 329, 346, 351, 360, 364, 374,
 376, 394f, 398, 413f, 418, 420f, 433,
 440, 442, 449, 452, 456, 462, 470,
 477.
 The New Zion Church (15) 138f; 153,
 172, 223, 249, 254, 279, 313, 337,
 339, 347, 351, 377, 404, 419, 454,
 470.
 Tonga people 85; 52, 91, 116, 118, 170,
 477.
 Traditioning 284f, 425f, 445.
 Trance 265-272; 23, 28, 117, 235.
 Transnationalism 472-488; 232, 248f,
 256, 278, 468.
 Tuberculosis 240f; 72, 416.
 Turner, Harold, W. 4, 6-8, 181, 401,
 425.
 Turner, Victor 197.
 Uniforms and costumes s. apparel!
 Urban life 73, 78f, 82f, 163, 165, 224,
 240, 251, 302, 307, 321, 359, 385,
 447, 457, 467, 472, 483f, 486ff.
 Vaccination campaigns 101, 106, 242f,
 261f, 295, 322, 443.
 Valilani, Ezra 93, 119.
 Velemu, Fesitala 94-96, 111, 353, 355,
 357.
 Velemu, Suwela 159, 298, 353, 355.
 Voliva, Wilbur G. 97-99.
 Vimbuza possession cult 236f; 30, 82,
 187, 245, 252, 269f, 291, 367.
 Walls, Andrew 5, 8, 58, 370f.
 Water 229-232; 323-329; 330-332; 22,
 278, 291, 334f, 336, 383f, 453f.
 holy ~ 95, 111, 140, 144, 174, 177,
 225, 227, 249, 252, 360, 376f, 414,
 421, 424, 471, 526.
 Watchtower Movement 73, 392, 449f,
 456f.
 Witchcraft 286-295, 73, 201, 220f, 244f,
 252, 259, 275, 282.
 Women 385-399, 53f (70), 169, 190,
 240, 256, 292, 304f, 315, 345, 355,
 374, 380ff, 402, 406, 412, 428, 451.
 as spirit-bearers 18, 110, 220, 224,
 235, 290f, 318, 332.
 Delilah syndrome 196, 228, 231,
 376ff.
 dresscode 170f, 174f.
 Zambezi Industrial Mission (ZIM) 62ff,
 89ff, 116, 183, 245.
 ZCC (8) 128-130, 170-172, 175, 187,
 208, 210, 225, 229-232, 249f, 252,
 256, 263, 278, 301, 307, 319, 326,
 328, 338, 344, 363, 376, 388, 429,
 433, 440, 447f, 468, 470, 477f, 487.
 ZEMA 159, 476, 521.

- Zion Christian Prophecy Church (11) 133f, 121, 139, 186, 269, 347, 352, 409ff, 478.
- Zion Church (30) 158-160, 162, 164, 197, 216ff, 231, 255, 260, 300, 304f, 310, 359, 402, 414, 436f, 446, 476f.
- Zion Sabbath Church (18) 148f, 48, 154, 171, 346.
- Zion Sabbath Church (22) 153, 48. (led by R. Manong'a)
- Zion Sabbath Church (23) 153, 48. (led by K. Phiri)
- Zion Sabbath Church (24) 154, 48. (led by B. Nda)
- Zion Sabbath Kenani Church (20) 150, 48, 329.
- Zion ya Kang'oma (6) 113f, 325, 448.
- Zionism: Identity and definition of ~ 4ff, 43, 46, 116, 167, 175, 184, 192, 213, 220, 247, 257, 274, 278, 281, 313, 320f, 371, 433, 448, 482, 484, 486.
- in Swaziland 4f, 49f, 52, 54, 56, 76, 99, 129, 135, 341, 440.
- in Botswana 100, 248.
- in Mozambique 5, 88, 99, 106, 108, 129f, 135f, 138f, 141, 150, 174, 251, 261, 298f, 305, 317, 359, 379, 395, 421, 429, 435, 468, 478. see also Mozambique.
- in Tanzania 239, 248, 432, 478.
- in South Africa 4-9, 34, 41, 43, 45, 49, 59ff, 70, 75-79, 82f, 85-90, 93, 97-106, 109, 115, 117-119, 122f, 125f, 128-130, 133f, 136f, 138, 142f, 146f, 149f, 155, 159f, 168, 170, 173, 180, 183, 187f, 209, 227f, 232, 235, 237, 241f, 247ff, 270, 278, 281, 284, 297, 301, 307, 313, 319, 321, 325, 330, 341, 343f, 347, 356, 362, 369, 391, 396, 400f, 408, 410f, 416, 420, 426, 429, 432, 433f, 437, 440, 443-448, 459, 468ff, 474, 476ff, 481, 486.
- in the USA 13f, 18f, 24, 26f, 31-44, 75, 78, 87, 88, 97f, 146, 159, 168, 184, 193, 235, 246, 249, 323, 359, 427, 433, 455, 468, 476, 479, 483-487.
- in Zambia 94, 104, 133f, 319, 347, 432, 478.
- in Zimbabwe 20, 70, 83, 93, 104f, 119f, 128, 130, 137, 149, 173, 223, 272, 286, 291, 300, 310, 319, 322, 332, 344, 352, 364, 421f, 429, 453, 558, 461, 464, 477, 524, origin of name 35f, 75.
- Ziwasheni 330-332, 336, 438.
- Zulu (Nguni) people 49-57, 46, 67, 75-78, 117f, 134, 168, 170, 173, 179f, 183, 187, 228f, 235, 237, 248f, 279f, 289, 309f, 317, 324, 344f, 356, 380, 392, 400, 408, 419f, 426, 438, 454, 464, 476.

Genealogy of Zionism in Malawi





This book presents an African Christian movement full of vitality and creativity. The reader will meet believers who drink milk so that they may dream about angels, reports about funerals where the mourners dance with the coffin on their shoulders and church members who are ritually not allowed to fertilize their fields or wear neck ties.

The author's unique insight into Malawi's Christian community addresses important issues in society. Why have 'Spirit Churches,' including Pentecostalism, been so successful in Malawi? Why do some religious groups still refuse medical help, up to the point that children die of cholera? How did the independent churches deal with the colonial trauma? In this masterful portrait, Strohbehn takes the reader from industrial mine compounds to rural colonies, where churches have set up their own spiritual and political rule. He carefully dissects the fine lines between traditional notions and Christianity's influence. We find a spiritual portrait of the Ngoni people, a fascinating cultural analysis of dancing and an encounter with a unique style of preaching.

"STROHBEHN'S AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE ON MALAWIAN MIGRANT WORKERS AND THEIR EXPERIENCE OF ZIONISM BRINGS OUT A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT MINISTERS ARE FACING TODAY."

PROF. MAAKE MASANGO, UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA



Ulf Strohbehn, originally from Germany, came to Malawi in 1997 and worked for fifteen years at the International Bible College Berea in Ndirande, Blantyre. He has been at the forefront of contextualized theology in the country and in doing so has helped many Christians to live a wholistic life and to proclaim a culturally relevant Gospel.

Ulf also taught at Chancellor College, Zomba and lectured in cultural anthropology at the Catholic University of Malawi. He currently lives in Finland and works as a missionary trainer and cultural anthropologist for Fida International. He holds a BA degree from Global University, MA and PhD degrees from the University of Malawi, Chancellor College, Zomba.

ISBN 978-99960-45-16-5



9 789996 045165

Mzuni Books no. 17



This book is part of Mzuni Press, which offers a range of books on religion, culture and society from Malawi.